



# DAYS OF THE PAST



A MEDLEY OF MEMORIES

ALEXANDER INNES SHAND

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*A Medley of Memories*

BY

ALEXANDER INNES SHAND

AUTHOR OF 'OLD-TIME TRAVEL'



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## CHAPTER I

### THE RURAL REVOLUTION

LORD COCKBURN, in his *Circuit Journeys*, remarks on the marvellous improvements he had seen on his progresses through Aberdeenshire. Memory does not carry me quite so far back, though I have seen his lordship seated on the bench, but I can remember much of the devolution of the transformation. Few of the semi-lowland shires had to contend with greater disadvantages. The uplands were highland; the midlands were hill and moss; and the eastern flats, with the bleak coast of Buchan, are swept by bitter gales from the Pole. In Buchan, trees and bushes were shaved, as with a razor, when they rose above the shelter of the 'dens.' The climate was severe and the soil unkindly. Sand dunes fenced the county from the Atlantic gales, yet a parish had been buried there under the sand drift. The ground was fertile in granite, yet it is a remarkable fact that the venerable buildings of Old Aberdeen were of imported freestone, which shows that the Aberdonians of ancient days, if enterprising, were not resourceful. It was very different with the agriculturists in the nineteenth century, and especially

towards the middle of it. They bid, with the Lothians, for a lead in high farming, and showed the world the way in cattle breeding. They were among the first to appreciate the value of guano, and they found that their farms, freely manured, reared such rich crops as were not to be seen elsewhere. In a dry season in southern England the worried partridges find no cover in either turnips or mangolds. In Aberdeenshire you wade over the knee; you can only work with the most powerful dogs, and the swedes after a morning shower hold whole bucketfuls of water. So with exuberant winter-feeding, Aberdeenshire breeders invested money in shorthorns and the polled Angus. Naturally they went in for enclosures. In my own boyhood I can recollect on the crofts and small farms—even now there are few farms rented above £200—the barefooted herd-boys and herd-girls shouting after the scraggy beasts they had in charge, for ever encroaching on neighbours' boundaries. Now, the boys and girls with shoe leather and stockings are at the board schools; and, except to scare the crows from the crops, there is no necessity for their services. When the fields were being cleared for the plough, loose stone enclosures, but substantially built, followed as matter of course. The stones must be disposed of somehow. The worst of those dikes was that they became almost impregnable refuges for vermin. Stoats, weasels, and rats, with the mis-

chievous rabbits, bid defiance to the keenest ferrets. That clearing the ground was a costly business for improving landlords. I have seen enormous granite blocks, locally denominated 'haythens,' occupy skilled men a day or two in drilling and blasting.

Johnson declared there were no trees in East Scotland, and Cockburn said much the same of Aberdeen. He did not take count of the magnificent pines in the forests of Deeside, or the sylvan 'Paradise' of Monymusk; of the beeches and elms round many an ancestral fortalice, and of the clumps of wind-beaten ashes that screened the cottage or the lonely homestead. But I have seen sheltering plantations of spruce springing up everywhere—they have drawn clouds of cushat-doves, as destructive as the rabbits—and it is only a pity that larches did not take the place of the spruce or the silver fir. For larch always commands a sale for fencing and building purposes, whereas in the heavy 'windfalls,' after some devastating gale, the spruce lies rotting, a drug in the market.

Wheat was a delicate exotic and a speculative crop. On the estates I used to shoot over, I only remember a single field annually sown and steadfastly persisted with, and that was on the sunny North Mains of Barra, near the scene of the first decisive battle won by the Bruce over the Comyns. But everywhere the skirts of the

heather were going back; isolated patches of morass were being reclaimed; the grouse was giving way to the partridge, and the snipe to the landrail. But even the belated oat crops were failures in cold, showery years, and the great stand-by of progressive farmers with capital was their cattle. M'Combie of Tillyfour, and Grant Duff of Eden, the father of Sir Mountstuart, were notable for their pedigree herds. The most famous of all was Amos Cruickshank of Sittyton, the quaker, who had grudged no money in purchases, and had brought his herd of shorthorns almost to perfection. He rented two of the best farms from a cousin of mine. His steading was within half a mile of the house where from my nursery days I had always found a home. His annual sales of bull calves drew admiring purchasers from all Scotland, from England, and the Colonies. The sale began with a parade of the superb fathers of the herd. The mansion overflowed with guests from the county, who came in vehicles of every kind, and their horses found shelter in byres, the stabling of the home-farm, or anywhere. The sale was preceded by an early dinner at the farm. But the quaker, who was a temperance man, stuck to his principles, and, contrary to the universal practice in the county, gave the visitors nothing stronger than indifferent beer. On one of those occasions he was scandalised when one of the gentlemen from the house brought up half a dozen of port

and as many of champagne for his own immediate circle. Yet though the bidders came to the scratch unprimed, the bidding was none the less spirited, and the pick of the calves fetched what were then considered inordinate prices. Cruickshank did well and died in affluence ; but he cut his own throat, for as his stock was disseminated his sales fell off.

On the other hand, I saw how the ordinary breeders gained with the opening of the railways. Formerly they sent their cattle by road, losing flesh and condition, to local markets that were overstocked. The trucks on the rail opened easy communications with the south, till the prime beef from Aberdeen and Angus fetched the top prices at Leadenhall, and arable land was broken up for the 'grass parks' which were more surely remunerative.

At that time rents were rising fast, till they actually boomed. Forty years ago, one of the trustees on the personal estate of a wealthy iron-master complained that though they were instructed to invest solely in land, they could not buy at reasonable prices. The idea then was that 'the land could not run away,' and few were far-sighted enough to foresee the prospective fall. The shrewdest of Scots, with money in bank, were inclined to discount a golden future. A relation of my own age had a twenty years' minority. He might, on coming of age, have come into a great

sum of ready money. He did not find a shilling to his credit, but his estates were in grand condition. The friendly and capable Writer to the Signet who had administered them conscientiously believed he had been acting for the best. Farm steadings had been rebuilt or extended; roads had been made; diking, draining, and ditching had been carried out on a colossal scale. That was a somewhat exceptional case; the factor may have overshot the mark, but, more or less, the same thing was going on in many places. Some of the cottages, or rather hovels, which were cleared away were primitive in the extreme. Built of loose stones, they were roofed with turf, and the smoke partially escaped through an aperture over the peat fire, where a cask roped with straw did doubtful duty for a chimney. There were two so-called rooms, 'a but and a ben,' and in the bigger was the box-bed, where the bulk of the family slept. One of these hovels, I remember, was tenanted by an old gentleman, who had his croft rent free for doing 'orra jobs' about the mansion house. He used to drive cattle in a flowing, flowered dressing-gown, which had been passed on to him, and he only shaved his grey beard at long intervals. One of my earliest recollections is seeing him biting off the tails of a litter of terrier puppies in the courtyard. He was a philosopher in his own way, and with the free run of the servants' hall and butler's pantry, he



took life easily. He never complained. Once when the landlord paid a morning visit, he splashed from the drainage outside the door into a puddle within where some ducklings were disporting themselves, and the wet was dripping over him from the blackened rafters. 'Why, John!' was the exclamation, 'you are in a terrible state here, we must have your roof overhauled.' 'Ay, it's lettin' in some water,' was the quiet reply, 'but it's gey thick, and there are but antrim drops, and the wife and I do weel eneuch in the bed under our auld umbrella.'

Then the larger tenants universally had nineteen years' leases, and would have liked them longer, though the tenure was secure; but a few of the farms and the crofts had been passed on from generation to generation, and the Lowlands, like the Highland 'tacks', were run somewhat on the patriarchal system. That was expressed in the old phase and phrase of the 'kindly tenants.' Part of the rent was invariably paid in 'kain and carriages.' The kain was a certain number of fowls, to be duly delivered, and under carriages, the tenants were bound to do a certain amount of carting of coals, etc. As to these old imposts, there is a good story in Sir Walter Scott's *Journal*. There was another restriction the tenants liked less. They were 'thirled' to the landlord's mill,—that is to say, they had to bring all their corn to be ground there at a fixed rate. The old mill

was a favourite resort of us boys. We used to revel in the smell of the fresh meal, descending in cascades, groping in it, wrist-deep, and devouring it too, by handfuls. Then there was the deep mill-lade under the great moss-grown wheel, with the speckled trout shooting into darksome crevices, and within gunshot was the sedgy dam, shrouded with dark willow and alder, haunted by mallards, teals, and waterhen.

There was a more serious grievance the tenants brooded over, though they took it in acquiescent silence. Reform, enlarging the roll of the 'old freeholders,' had given them votes, but no shadow of political power. The county was a safe Conservative seat, and though occasionally there was a contested election, the result was a foregone conclusion. The politics of the landlords were known; they simply counted heads and brought their tenants up to the hustings. To take a special instance. A liberal-minded relative of mine took great and justifiable credit for giving one of his farmers leave to vote Liberal. But the man was an educated vet, son-in-law of an invaluable old bailiff, which extenuated what in other circumstances would have been an unpardonable act of treachery to the order of the landlords. Retribution came in due course, with the ballot and the passing of new reform acts. There was a reaction with a vengeance, and for many a year the Tories had never another chance.



If the farmers clung to the land, the farm hands were always changing. The good ploughmen and 'horsemen' had high wages, but the supply was always in excess of the demand. Nor had they any great attraction to any particular place, for their living was everywhere coarse—brose and kail, porridge and skim milk—and the quarters invariably of the roughest. Thanks to close friendship with an old keeper who pigged with the farm folk, I paid frequent visits to their joint bedroom in one of the most generously managed of home-farms. It was a loft in which confusion was worse confounded; soaking and muddy garments were tossed about, and the rough beds unmade in the middle of the afternoon. The young woman who cooked and did for the men had charge of the dairy as well, and she would have given them even less attention, had not the arrangement been far from conducive to morality. Rural morality, indeed, was at a low ebb, though it is only fair to say that the fair sinner generally ended as an honest woman and settled down into sober matrimony. The farm servants were restless, and they had periodical opportunity of changing places at the 'feeing' or hiring markets, held all over the country. Great festive occasions these markets were, combined with the cattle and sheep sales, before the railway carried stock to central depôts. There were booths of itinerant merchants, travelling shows, and above all, refreshment tents, flowing

with whisky and porter. Ere night fell, the most sober of the men were concerned in liquor, and the girls, stuffed with sweets and gingerbread, were flaming forth in bright shawls and gaudy ribbons, the gifts of temporarily devoted swains.

Then prosperity was the rule rather than the exception, though there might be wet autumns and poor harvests. There was little question of reduction of rents, till they had been abnormally raised by the good times and lively competition. I have often looked in on rent day, on the little square room at the home farm, where the clerk of the Edinburgh agent sat with a square decanter of whisky at one elbow and the old grieve at the other. Man after man walked in, handed over his grimy notes, made the inevitable requests, did a moderate amount of grumbling, swallowed a bumper and walked out. At midday all sat down to a substantial dinner, with toasts and steaming toddy *ad libitum*. Every other occasion was seized for a festivity—a coming of age, a wedding, or sometimes even a funeral. It was amusing to mark how the stereotyped speeches used to run in the identical grooves, except with the parochial clergy, who were florid and professional orators. How eloquently they did flatter the laird, and even remote connections of the family! The oldest tenant who proposed his health always quoted the maxim of ‘live and let live,’ a shrewd hint of what was expected by the canny Scots-

men, and the fiddles of the orchestra, according to the county paper, invariably 'discoursed sweet music' in the intervals.

The fiddlers feasted with the rest, but they earned their money. There were local celebrities like 'Wandering Willie,' who were everywhere in request, and the quantity of toddy with which they refreshed themselves was astounding. For a ball invariably succeeded these special dinners. The scene was a long loft, decorated with evergreens or flowers, where reels and country dances alternated in endless succession. The gymnastics grew more violent as the night went on. It was tremendously hard work, and took it out of one more than the longest day's shooting. I was hard enough then, but often I have tumbled into bed in the small hours, to wake towards noon, aching in every limb. But these jovial rural carnivals have been going out of fashion. Some of the straighter-laced of the gentry said they were prejudicial to morals,—which possibly was true, for as Christopher North wrote, it was a perilous temptation for an enamoured bachelor, seeing the belle of the ball home across the blooming heather. But the more probable explanation is, that the ties between landlord and tenant have been loosening, and with chronic reduction of rents, the shoe has been pinching severely.

I had heard more than I saw of the old conviviality. I can only once recall a gentleman

committing himself in a drawing-room, where he came a cropper over an ottoman and went a header on the hearth-rug. And he was a genuine survival of the old school, a boon companion of the fox-hunting Lord Kintore of his time, and of the Lord Panmure of Brechin, noted as one of the three hardest drinking peers in the islands. His arbitrary hospitality was commemorated by 'Nimrod' in *The Northern Tour*, when he firmly refused the request of a brother-in-law, who, after the party had been mixing their liquors for hours, humbly 'suppllicated' for a tumbler. My father was an abstemious man, but he could speak of nights with Lord Panmure at Brechin Castle, of which we find almost fabulous reports in the *Biography of Constable*—not the artist, but the publisher. And at my father's own seat of the Burn, on the North Esk, the summer houses on the romantic walks along the overhanging banks were sections of Madeira hogsheads, emptied at the entertainments of Lord Adam Gordon, his predecessor in the property.

If I saw any other signs of excess, it was at state funerals. No doubt things had mended much since the days of Duncan Forbes of Colloden, Lord President of the Court of Session and the most venerated of Scottish statesmen, when he set the example of drinking so deep at the funeral of his much-lamented mother, that when the procession reached the kirk, it was found the corpse had

been forgotten. But still, when the ceremony came off in a chill winter day, the company, who had gathered from far and near, expected generous cheer, and did it ample justice. It was an odd blending of mourning—more or less sincere—and joviality. Friends were pleased to meet, and there were long arrears of local gossip to be discussed. All turned up with broad ‘weepers’ of cambric, stitched on the coat cuffs. The dealing out of scarves, hat-bands, and gloves, was followed by the circulation of wine and cake, and that by prayer and solemn words of exhortation. When the cortège came back from the vault, which was often miles away, though many families had their private mausoleum within easy reach, the mourners to a man were chilled and famished. Nothing could be more welcome than the announcement of the late luncheon, and sorrow served only to give a keener edge to the appetite. The strong ale and the wines flowed freely, and frequently there was a melancholy contrast between the oblivious conviviality of the hungry guests and the efforts of the grief-stricken entertainer to do the honours.

But on these melancholy occasions there were invariably those from whom the bereaved family was sure of sympathy. Domestic servants and out-of-door retainers knew well when they were well-off, and seldom left the situations in which they had been bred and almost born. The boy who was entered to knives and boots, often died

a grey-haired butler, with the keys and *carte blanche* over the cellar, and unlimited vicarious authority. The housekeeper, who might have been trusted with untold gold, was equally paramount in her own department. They kept a saving eye on details, and drove their subordinates with a tight rein, but, like Caleb Balderstone, they made the honour of the family their own, and prided themselves on the profusion of the table. There were no *dîners à la Russe*, with finikin carving at the side table; and the board used to groan under the load of good fare, with such trifles as pairs of goslings and turkey poults for side dishes. So the show of cold and *réchauffé* on the sideboard at next morning's breakfast was superb. But it was at weddings or the funeral feasts that they felt bound to surpass themselves. I have seen one venerable retainer, a beloved friend of my own, nerving himself manfully for his onerous duties at a funeral luncheon, filling the glasses indefatigably, whispering recommendations of choice dishes into the ears of his numerous acquaintances, and then breaking down in sobs and retiring to the pantry till he had pulled himself together to resume his painful task. When the guests were gone he took to bed, and only got out of it to be retired on a pension.



## CHAPTER II

### THE CHANGES IN LONDON

THE reign of Victoria saw marvellous transformation scenes in London. According to that once popular novelist, G. P. R. James, Simon Reynard, the intriguing Spanish ambassador, remarked epigrammatically that in the Tower he read the history of England. The Victorian era was a record of imperial expansion with London for the loadstone. The growth of the overcrowded metropolis exceeded the expansion of an empire which had been casually annexing kingdoms and principalities. When her accession was announced to the girl-heiress at the semi-rural palace of Kensington, England had barely found breathing-time after the exhausting struggle in which she had fought one half the continent and subsidised the other. When she celebrated her jubilee, the Empress-Queen, though latterly she had lived in retirement, was the idol of a nation which under her rule had been rapidly growing rich. The fleet assembled at Spithead was the visible sign of supremacy on the ocean. Battleships, armoured cruisers, and torpedo boats were the watch-dogs of the commerce which had been bringing wealth to the port

of London. London had been the centre of many industries which till then had been indifferent to foreign competition. The national credit had never stood higher, and in the superabundance of golden or gilt-edged securities, Sam Weller's 'reduced counsels' stood at an exceptional premium. Floating on the flood of the swelling Pactolus, London had at last begun to realise its responsibilities. Private expenditure was stimulating public munificence. The architect with ideas had a free hand, and the speculative builder never had a better time. Antiquated structures and squalid back streets were swept away; luxurious mansions and decent dwellings were rising in their places. If there was a dreary monotony in the stuccoed façades of new crescents and terraces, there was no denying the improvement in the general effect, and still more in substantial comforts. *Punch* might sneer at the squirts in Trafalgar Square, and laugh at the lions of the Nelson Column; but there are points of view, such as those of the Palladio-like Government Offices from the water-bridge in St. James's Park, which rival those from the Ponte Vecchio of Florence, or the Schiavoni of Venice.

Though falling into the yellow leaf, memory does not take me back to Queen Victoria's accession; but as a very small boy I can remember the birth of the Princess Royal, the loyal excitement in Edinburgh, and the salute from the Castle that shook the town. Two years afterwards, on my



first visit to England, I sailed for Liverpool from the Glasgow Broomielaw in the superb new steamer, the *Princess Royal*—I forget her modest tonnage. That summer I went no further south than Leamington, where now I miss the avenue of noble elms which then shaded the promenade. I was introduced to Victorian London a few years later, when we drove by the Chevy Chase Coach through the Border scenery from Edinburgh to take the North-Eastern train at Newcastle. Dick Whittington never looked back so longingly to London as I looked forward. I little thought how much I should see of it later, and how well I should know the flags in Pall Mall. Nor were my dreams of golden-paved streets and gold to be had for the gathering. Even then a voracious reader and highly sensitive to casual associations, London sights and London celebrities were to me at that time a very loadstone of attraction. Our first sight of London, our first impressions of the Continent,—these are landmarks in the memory, never to be obliterated. Byron seldom wrote a truer or more melodious couplet than—

‘There’s not a joy the world can give like that it takes away,  
When the glow of early thought declines in feeling’s dull decay.’

Novelty gave point to the excitement which was sometimes calmed, but seldom satiated. I know not what I enjoyed most—the sculptured tombs of monarchs in the Abbey or the monuments of fallen heroes in the Cathedral church—the survey

from the caged summit of the Monument, the pessimism of whose guardian had depressed Tom Pinch, another young man from the country—the esplanade at Greenwich Hospital, with the old blue-coated pensioners crawling about like torpid wasps, or the quaint Chinese junk, moored off Blackwall, with its silken hangings and porcelain, its carvings in jade and its uncanny idols. Then there were the Zoological, and the Thames Tunnel, with its dimly lighted bazaar, and Madame Tussaud's, where we looked longingly at the forbidden door of the Chamber of Horrors, and one even had fearsome pleasure in the scientific Polytechnic, where you were shocked by electric batteries, and had the excitement of the descent in the diving-bell. Verrey's, with its cakes and its ices, was nearly next door. You felt agreeably lost in the whirl of the Strand and Fleet Street, with the blocks of traffic, and the show in the shop windows; it was like visiting the bazaars of Bagdad or Bassorah in company of Haroun Alraschid and his vizier. The white-aproned touts at the portals of Doctors' Commons reminded you of David Copperfield and of old Mr. Weller, let in for his rash matrimonial venture.

There were no omnibuses then to the north of the Tweed, and the London four-wheeler, or the dashing hansom, was a vast improvement on the 'minnibus' of Edinburgh—a local speciality like a covered Irish car, which was an exceedingly tight fit for four, and which more than once broke down

ignominiously when taking me to catch an early steamer at Granton Pier. And *apropos* of aquatics, that was the golden age of cheap and quick conveyancing on the river. The *Dahlias* and *Sunflowers*, and the numbered 'Watermen,' were plying perpetually from Putney to Greenwich, but most industriously between Hungerford Stairs and Paul's Wharf. Owing to their flying moorings against the tide, they would smash their paddle boxes like swift steamers on the rapid Danube, cast off again, and, go on as if nothing had happened. They had run the old wherrymen and scullers off the Thames, and in fine weather were formidable competitors to the omnibuses.

But all minor sensations were swallowed up in the anxiety for a glimpse at the Queen. We had gone to Eton to draw a cousin in Dr. Goodford's house—he was then Mr. Goodford—and the expedition was to include a visit to the castle where Her Majesty was in residence. Often since then I have admired the historical pile when pulling past on the river, and thought how costly it would be to take it over a repairing lease, but in that glorious day in June, the glories of the palace-château were lost upon me. My Eton cousin's mind was set upon ices in the morning, a dinner at the White Hart towards eve, the probable tip to follow. I could think of nothing but the assurance that the Sovereign was going for a drive at three, and that I should actually see her in the body. Ever since

I have understood and sympathised with the loyal enthusiasm of provincial crowds who flock in a suffocating crush to cheer a royal progress. Preceded by its outriders, the open carriage left the castle gates and swept down the Long Avenue. I can see the youthful matron, as she was then, sitting by her husband's side, bowing and smiling graciously. Her hand was unconsciously caressing the Princess Royal, who was standing and bending over her mother's knee. Seated as she was, you did not note the shortness of stature on which Greville remarks in his flattering notice of her. Quietly dressed, yet with some touch of coquetry in the summer toilet, she seemed to me a dazzling vision of grace and beauty. She was smiling again when I saw her at her Jubilee, with grey in her hair and furrows on her brow, but how much had she done and seen and suffered in the interval!

With half the world I was in London again in the Great Exhibition year. The Crystal Palace enclosing some of the secular timber in Hyde Park, conceived by the Prince Consort and planned by the chief of the Duke of Devonshire's hot-houses, was a monument of progress, fondly meant as a cosmopolitan Temple of Concord, and the symbol of a new departure in amicable commercial relations. Never shall I forget the first stupefying effect on a youth who had scarcely dreamed of such fairy-like splendour. With the courts displaying the wares of the world, with the crash of

music and the blaze of colours, with the views down the long vistas under Venetian streamers, with the sculptures and groups of statuary scattered along the aisles, with new enchantments awaiting you at every turn, it was a vision of the Arabian Nights from which you feared to awaken. One crowd was pressing round Hiram Power's Greek slave, another around the Koh-i-noor, securely guarded by policemen. But the half-exhausted mines of Golconda were outshone, for America showed a towering obelisk of gold to advertise the newly discovered treasures of California.

All nations had come up to the great show, as Jews used to flock to the festivals of Jerusalem. The scanty hotel accommodation was overcrowded : Claridge's and other aristocratic resorts could pick and choose among royalties and foreign princes. But the oddest and most picturesque gatherings were in Leicester Square and in Seven Dials. *Punch* and the new police paid special attention to the troops of out-of-elbow strangers who had found their way across the Channel. What they came for, or how they paid their way, no one could exactly say. They were attended by agents of the Rue Jerusalem, by emissaries from St. Petersburg, Vienna, and Berlin, and shadowed by detectives from Scotland Yard. I was taken one evening to dine at a restaurant in Leicester Square—I think it was Berthollini's, celebrated in the parody of a popular song by Albert Smith—and a



queerer assemblage I had never set eyes on. At that time when Mechi of Tiptree Hall and agricultural celebrity was making a fortune by his razors, everybody shaved, except scamps and cavalry officers. In that gathering the absence of the barber was more conspicuous than the neglect of the washerwoman. Napkins were tucked under collarless chins; the fork was a casual auxiliary to the knife; the plates were carefully cleaned and the sauces mopped up by use of a bread-crust; and in the guttural confusion of cosmopolitan speech you might have been among the scattering builders of Babel. The *entente cordiale* notwithstanding, *Punch* was humorously satirical on our French friends. Two of his sketches I well remember. One presented a couple of briskly Parisian *badauds* taken aback by the startling surprise of a sponge and basin in the Exhibition. ‘*Tiens, Alphonse, qu’est-ce que c’est que ça ?*’ says Jules to his comrade. Another was a night scene from the top of the Haymarket, with ladies in crinoline and a lavish show of silk stocking, inscribed: ‘Some foreign produce we could very well spare.’

On the other hand, even when the Christmas agricultural shows used to be held in Baker Street, never before was the town so full of rustics, bent upon brief enjoyment of life in London. On frequented routes there was no getting a seat in the omnibuses; cabmen took outrageous liberties with simple-minded country folk. It was not then

the custom to run plays in the theatres, but pieces that had caught on were being given night after night at the leading houses. I remember how the spectacular 'Princesses of the Alhambra' drew at the Princess's, not so much because the gorgeous decorations anticipated the splendours of a future generation, as because Flexmore the famous clown played the Princesses' pet monkey. When he caught his tail in a chest, and aggravated his agonies by passionately stamping on the lid, all the spectators were convulsed. In fact, we provincials, trained upon travelling circuses and strolling companies of actors, cared for sensations and sights rather than refinements. We were as keen upon Punch and Judy in the streets as Sampson Brass's eccentric lodger in *The Old Curiosity Shop*; we were always brought to a stop at the bottom of Suffolk Street by the cage of the happy family, where the owl blinked amiably at the cat lying down with the mouse; and we paid more than one visit to Astley's, over Westminster Bridge, where Mr. Widdycombe, as Napoleon, had been gratuitously advertised in the *Bon Gaultier Ballads*. However the evening might be passed, 'it was pretty sure to end at Evans's,' where the topical songs were suited rather to the Georgian than to the Victorian era. Chops and Welsh rabbits were the order of the night, but the consumption of shellfish there and at Scott's and other night-houses in the neighbourhood of the Haymarket

was extraordinary. Lobsters and oysters were unaccustomed delicacies to the cotton spinners of the Palatinate and the men of the Midlands. Then the oysters were so cheap, that, as old Mr. Weller had observed to Mr. Pickwick shortly before, the poor of Whitechapel, when tending to despair, made a rush for the oyster stall instead of the gin palace. Oysters and stout were still as natural a sequel to the play as when Walter Scott, who was being feasted everywhere and by everybody, climbed the corkscrew stairs from the boxes in the Old Adelphi to sup with Daniel Terry in his 'squirrel's cage.'

I had seen the Queen and Prince Consort on my previous visit. Even as a boy it had struck me that there was something of foreboding melancholy in the Prince's handsome face, and I was at Gibraltar when the news of his death threw the garrison into genuine mourning. In the Exhibition year, being comparatively at rest as to Royalties, my ambition was for a sight of the Iron Duke. I did see the national hero, and followed him as he walked his horse up Constitution Hill to the mansion that was given by the gratitude of the nation. There the lower windows were still closed by the iron shutters, memorials of the fickleness of the mob, which would have torn him from his saddle, had it not been for the interposition of Peel's new police. With abstracted face, gazing fixedly before him,



mechanically he kept raising his finger to the brim of his hat, in answer to the incessant salutations he rather expected than saw. A light-weight, for he was spare of figure and stood barely five feet seven, he sat his horse with the ease of the habitual horseman, who used to strike across country in southern France when hounds were running, and breathe the best mounted of his aides-de-camp in the gallop to visit his distant outposts. The dress in the severe military style was faultless; the buttoned blue frock-coat, the white ducks tightly strapped down, and the stock with the silver buckle showing conspicuously behind.

At that time the Duke, with his commanding influence and his pre-eminence in politics, had been singled out as the subject of endless caricatures which figured in the printshop at the bottom of St. James's Street, side by side with engravings of his numberless portraits. Two of the caricatures I specially remember. One represented a stage coachman in heavy capes with great bone buttons, subscribed, 'The man wot drives the Sovereign'—counterpart to another of Earl Grey—'The man wot drives the Opposition.' But more artistically effective was a shadowy face, the stern and determined features looming through a haze, with the motto :—

'What seemed a head,  
The image of a kingly crown had on.'

Even satire treated the Duke with the reverence due to a heroic personality, and the caricatures flattered the authority they sought to undermine. When he was carried on the State car to St. Paul's in the following year, some remorse must have mingled with the general mourning, and I was sadly disappointed that I missed the memorable funeral. The many incidents were vividly described by juvenile correspondents not much in the way of letter-writing: all the world from the highest to the lowest was in a state of feverish excitement, and I recollect hearing among other things how the old Duke of Cambridge had galloped down St. James's Street at a break-neck pace to clear up some passing confusion among the guards before the palace.

Strangely enough, perhaps, I was almost as keen about another celebrity, and was lucky enough to see him in 'the Lords.' If the caricaturists treated Wellington respectfully, with Brougham both caricaturists and lampooners took the freest fling. Never had so gifted a man laid himself open to such scathing ridicule. Memories of his younger days, revived by Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, were still rife in the Edinburgh Parliament House; of those days when the audacious young advocate, going on the Border Circuit, used to make poor old Lord Eskgrove's life a burden. Eskgrove, by the way, with his vacuous repetitions, was undoubtedly the original of Sir Robert Hazlewood

in *Guy Mannering*. And the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, in which Brougham had been praised and mercilessly scarified, were still in the flush of their popularity. A terror in debate, an encyclopædia of universal knowledge, all marvelled at the amazing grasp of the genius which in the same day, as his secretary told Greville, could flit from Chancery suits to philosophy and mathematics, and after correcting proofs for a 'Library of Useful Knowledge,' wind up with a tremendous philippic in the House of Lords. There was no getting to the bottom of his bodily strength; there was no overtaxing the power of his brain. Yet there was so much of the monkey or the mountebank in that universal genius that Sampson was for ever making sport for the Philistines. *Punch* had just depicted him standing on his head, flourishing his legs and the Blücher boots in the air—the Blüchers Thackeray sketched in the *Snob Papers*,—with the commentary, 'What he will do next.' The piquancy of the eccentric contrasts made me eager to see him, nor was I disappointed. Take him all in all, he was one of the ugliest of mortal men, and apparently he prided himself on setting off his personal deficiencies. The lofty forehead scarcely redeemed the mouth, the nose, the cadaverous complexion, and the eyes under their shaggy penthouses, that lent themselves so easily to most diabolical scowls. Wellington was austere spick and span; Brougham was one of the

worst-dressed men in the kingdom, in a day when statesmen and legislators were still among the dandies. He wore the famous plaid trousers: it was said he had picked up a web of the stuff, sold at a sacrifice, after spending fabulous sums on a Yorkshire election. There was a catch-phrase in those days of 'What a shocking bad hat!' But Brougham's headpiece was the shabbiest it was possible to conceive, a battered beaver with the bristles rubbed the wrong way, which no old clothesman would have picked out of the gutter. His gestures were grotesque as those of Johnson, and in his oratory he carried action to the heights and depths of absurdity. He swung his arms like a round-hitting prize-fighter, and bellowed like a bull of Bashan. I had longed to see him, nor was I surprised or disappointed. He was pretty much what fancy had painted. Brougham was a *lusus naturæ*, and is still a psychological puzzle. Neither I nor any one else is likely to look on his like again.

## CHAPTER III

### THE EVOLUTION OF THE HOTEL AND RESTAURANT

IN the middle of last century, and for years afterwards, few cities were so miserably supplied as London with commodious hotels and decent dining places. It is amazing now to contemplate the spirit of contentment which acquiesced in indifferent entertainment and resigned itself to uncomfortable quarters. In the matter of hotels the explanation is more simple, for till railways and steamboats brought customers to town there was little encouragement for enterprising inn-keepers. But Londoners, like other people, had to dine, and many of them must go out of doors to look for a dinner. Even young men of means and some position were much at a loss. The clubs were few, the membership was far more limited than now, and moreover dining in those somewhat solemn establishments was left more or less to elderly fogies. Of dining-rooms and popular taverns there was no dearth, but the internal arrangements, the attendance and the cooking, left much to desire. For a year or two before as a very young man I was balloted into the Wyndham, I prowled the streets each evening

in search of food: after I was introduced to the comforts of one of the most homelike of clubs, still I often shared the adventurous fare of less fortunate comrades left out in the cold. But when I first came to the front, the days of roughing it were going by, and the tavern had already given way to the restaurant. No man need have asked a better English dinner than that provided at Simpson's in the Strand. Simpson was the gastronomic Napoleon of a new epoch. A daring speculator who always saw his way, in after years he successfully ran Cremorne. I believe he was the brother of the other Simpson who originated the famous fish dinners at Billingsgate; where in the queerest company, with rough cooking and rude cutlery, you fared sumptuously for the small charge of eighteenpence. But Simpson's restaurant in the Strand was attractively mounted; the tables were decked in snowy drapery, and the peripatetic carvers, with aprons tucked up in their waistbelts, were faultlessly attired in spotless white. Peripatetics they were, for it was a conception of genius to wheel the joints on small round tables to your elbow and let you select your own cut. A healthy appetite may have had something to say to it, but never before nor since have I seen such saddles or sirloins. Charles, the head waiter, was omnipresent, ready, like deaf old M. Pascall of Philippes's in the Rue Montorgueil, with recommendations and suggestions. The marrow pud-



dings were features of the establishment, and the Gruyère and Camembert, then comparative novelties, were ranged on the side table with the ripe Stiltons and Cheshires. The liquors were of the best, but after dinner you were not driven out of doors nor were you bound to sit drinking for the good of the house. Passing through a tobacconist's, you mounted to a 'divan' on the upper floor. If I remember rightly, you paid a shilling at the door, for which you had coffee in a breakfast cup—which was a mistake—a cigar and the use of chess boards, backgammon boards, and the day's journals.

Simpson's drew amazingly as it deserved, but it soon found a formidable, though ephemeral, rival. Greville in his *Memoirs* speaks contemptuously of the Wellington, but the Gruncher was a fine gentleman and hyperfastidious. Possibly, too, his conservative sentimentality saw something of sacrilege in turning Crockford's temple of vicious fashion open to the profane vulgar. For the Wellington took possession of the palatial premises at the top of St. James's Street, where the old fishmonger kept open house for all and sundry who were inclined to play the deuce with their fortunes at the hazard table. There Disraeli had laid his opening scene in *Sybil*, on the Derby eve when Caravan was the favourite for the great race. There Whyte Melville's Digby Grand threw his last dice before adjourning in despair to pass the night upon

a bench in St. James's Park. There more reckless gamblers had beggared themselves than at Watier's, for Crockford's had had a far longer lease of life. Crockford's in its time had been the resort of every celebrity : of foreign statesmen like Talleyrand and Metternich ; of warriors like Wellington and Blücher ; of men of letters like Byron, Moore, and Bulwer Lytton ; of wits and sybarites like Luttrell and Albanley, and of all the rabble rout of loose men about town who followed in the train of the leaders of society.

I do not know that we gave much thought to those memories or conjured up the gay scenes of that vanished past. What we liked were the lofty rooms with their spacious windows, and the general sense of luxury given by gilded cornices, somewhat tarnished, and tall mirrors. Not that these would have sufficed to allure us. But the English fare was as good as at Simpson's ; there was greater variety in the *entrées* and *entremets*, and the table appointments were in keeping with the surroundings. There were green glasses at your elbow, suggesting 'hock,' for then the various growths of the Rheingau and the Gironde were unscientifically classified and seldom ordered. Then the ordinary tippie was Burton bitter ale, frothed in frosted tankards, supplemented by the modest half pint of nutty sherry, with which Sydney Scraper solaced himself at his club in the *Snob Papers*. The march of luxury has been moving fast since then.



Now the sort of men who were content then with sherry and beer, are become curious in Champagnes, Léovilles and Liebfraumlilchs, and all the choicer second growths.

For port and beef-steaks there was no better place than the Blue Posts in Cork Street. By the way, there was another Blue Posts in the Hay-market of much more questionable reputation. To dine satisfactorily at the Cork Street house, you had to be introduced by an *habitué* who had the ear of the head waiter and the pass-key of the cellar. It was a favourite haunt of Anthony Trollope, and in *The Claverings* he has given a sympathetic description of one of those snug little Blue Posts dinners, which must have been answerable for a good deal of gout and chronic indigestion. If the Blue Posts was famous for its steaks, Clunn's in Covent Garden was renowned for its Welsh mutton and marrow bones. It was in the north-west corner of the piazza, beside the portal which led down to Evans's. It was a sombre house, and you dined in a long dark slip of a room, with one large window at the eastern end. But the dark mahogany tables were miracles of radiant polish, as in old country mansions, where they were the pride of the chief butler, and at Clunn's the cloth used to be swept off before the decanters were brought in. The *menu* was good Old English, and the head waiter a true-blue Conservative. I used to ruffle him till he had got accustomed to my

eccentricities, by my predilection for legs of mutton boiled with caper sauce. Roast was the rule of that orthodox establishment. The mock turtle or thick oxtail was followed by salmon, cod or turbot, and marrow bones were the invariable sequel to the mountain haunch. As for the marrow bones, they might have been elephantine, except that elephants, owing to some malformation, have no marrow. There was always a suspicion that they were fictitiously packed: be that as it may, they tempted to a surfeit and were invariably corrected by a caulker of Glenlivet. Then with the Stilton and the devilled biscuits at dessert, carefully decanted port, as venerable as any from the bins at the Blue Posts, was placed on the mahogany. Now and again the landlord when in genial mood was to be 'wiled,' like Meg Dods of the Cleikum, out of a bottle of 1820. It came up shrouded in the cobwebs. Clunn's, though essentially a dining house, professed to be an hotel, and once when I had run up to town for the night, I arranged to take a bed there. The dining-room was darksome enough, but it was brightened by good company and good cheer. The fusty first-floor front smelt like a charnel house when you had withdrawn to its solitude from merry society, and getting into the great fourposter with its sable hangings was like stepping into a hearse. It may have been the marrow bones, the Stilton or the port, but never had I such a night of appalling nightmares.

The London in Fleet Street was a west central reflection of the Wellington, chiefly frequented by lawyers from Lincoln's Inn and the Temple, by prosperous clerks and well-to-do tradesmen. The St. James's Hall was opened when the Wellington had closed. The Café de l'Europe, next door to the Haymarket Theatre, had a mixed and motley *clientèle*. Started by an actor from the Adelphi who somehow found the capital, it had a strong theatrical connection. Then fashionable patrons of the drama, like Lord William Lennox, were mixing on a familiar footing with the shining lights of the stage. And the Café de l'Europe was cheek by jowl with the Raleigh Club, where billiards and broiled bones were the order of the night, towards the small hours. So the café was patronised by a rather fast set for dinners before the play and for suppers subsequently. I fancy there was a room on the upper floor where ladies were received without awkward questions being asked as to their marriage certificates. But the café was reputably conducted and the French cookery was more than fair. Of the second class French restaurants about Leicester Square, in St. Martin's Lane, I can tell nothing from personal experience. As I have said, I paid a single visit to one of them and was not tempted to repeat it. Berthollini's and Dubourg's were sung by Albert Smith and Angus Reach in topical lyrics, and described in their shilling *brochure* (the *Lounger in Regent Street*,

or *Sketches of London Life*), which caught on amazingly.

To the east of Temple Bar the classic taverns in Fleet Street were still flourishing. Had some of the most famous only held out a little longer, they would surely have renewed their youth and retrieved their fortunes, with the extraordinary impulse given to journalistic work. There were Dick's and Anderton's and the Cheshire Cheese, where you could superintend the cooking of steak or chop and say for yourself when it was done to a turn. There was a Mitre in Fetter Lane—not the Mitre where Johnson moralised to Boswell and mapped out the programme of his studies at Leyden. All of these had their admirers who clung to them from habit : most of them elderly gentlemen in the yellow leaf, who loved solid fare and crusted port, or struggling barristers who were content with tankards of ale, with something hot and strong to follow. On sentimental grounds I once sought the Cock in Fleet Street, to be sadly disillusioned. There was no sign of Tennyson's plump head waiter,—perhaps he was peacefully sleeping in the vaults of St. Clements Dane. A few purple-faced old gentlemen were still clinging to the place, but it was pervaded by a general air of drowsiness which extended to the service and the smouldering fires. I ordered a steak as *de rigueur* : in vain I waited, and after a volcanic explosion I fled and chartered a hansom for Pall Mall. Now I see

there is a Cockerel in Shaftesbury Avenue, where no doubt there is a very different *clientèle*.

In those days, on my return from sojourning on the Continent, there was nothing I enjoyed more than the luncheon in the city. The contrasts were so striking from the solitudes of the Alps, the shores of Lake Lemman, the dead-alive towns of stagnating Germany, even from the comparatively leisurely traffic of Brussels or Paris, to the roar of crowded streets, and the endless blocks in funereal procession of cabs and omnibuses. I used to hurry off to look up a cousin on the Stock Exchange, the best of good fellows, who was barely earning enough to pay his errand boy, and the bustle and scramble in Capel Court, the bellowing and bargaining from the privileged interior worked like a tonic. Under his guidance we dived into some dark-some alley and turned aside into Reuben's or Joe's or Ned's. How different from the Café Riche or the Maison Dorée, even from Champeaux in the Place de la Bourse, where speculators and *coulissiers* would assemble at high noon to empty flasks of burgundy or champagne and indulge in all manner of meretricious delicacies! In London men hustled each other at a bar, or sat, packed promiscuously at the small tables, with cloths that hinted economy in washing bills. You had barely elbow room to ply knife and fork, but if you were not pressed for time, it was a most amusing scene, though the manager looked askance at loiterers.



The steak or chop, served piping hot, was unexceptionable ; the mealy potatoes in their wrinkled jackets, were such a dream of perfection as is never realised in watery Ireland, where they are invariably waxy ; as the frothing tankards of ale or stout were refreshing after a course of light wines, and admirably adapted to the atmosphere. But all these early dinner houses closed their doors long before the shellfish shops in the Haymarket thought of taking down their shutters. Once, with a friend, in a fit of frugality, I went into the city about six P.M. to dine economically. We drew all the familiar luncheon coverts blank ; at one or two an old charwoman was sweeping out the place, and evidently suspected us of nefarious designs. In point of economy the expedition was a failure, but we might have been worse off. For Painter's in Leadenhall Street was round the corner, and there one could feast luxuriously. The window of the Ship and Turtle, like that of Chevet in the Palais Royal, was always an entrancing sight, with the shellbacks from the Caribbean Sea or Ascension floating in the tanks, an agreeable change for them from the painful deck passage under tropical sun-blaze, and all unconscious of their impending doom. And mystery lent a halo of romance to the treasures of calipash and calipee in the cellarage.

You breathed calipash and calipee as you climbed the thickly carpeted staircase, and you were never kept waiting. Half a dozen oysters

from Prince's in the Poultry, or Sweeting's in Cheapside, and the silver tureen with its fragrant contents was on the table. Hobson Newcome's brother-in-law remarked that Pendennis dining in Bryanston Square did not 'ave twice of turtle. At Painter's I am ashamed to remember that we used to 'ave twice or thrice of it, and that it rather whetted the appetite for the subsequent beefsteak. If port was associated with Clunn's or the Blue Posts, madeira and old East Indian sherry were the specialties at the Ship. But if the Ship were the house for a turtle dinner, it was to Birch's in Cornhill you gravitated for a turtle lunch. Birch's, between the Guildhall and the Mansion House, maintaining the gastronomic credit of the Guilds, was the city counterpart of Farrance's at Charing Cross, which had it all its own way in ices, pastry, and light refreshments, and prided itself on the graces of its pretty waitresses.

It is strange that Blackwall should have absolutely dropped out of the running among down-river dining places, though, perhaps, it is stranger that it should ever have been a popular resort, for the purlieus were the reverse of inviting. But as the Chevalier Beaujeu of the *Fortunes of Nigel* used to say, I have memory of the great bow window at Lovegrove's or the Brunswick, suspended over the river. It reminded you of a box on the grand tier in the opera house, or of the *salon* on the *entresol* of the Café de Paris, on the



Boulevards, where, sitting breast high above the pavement, you watched the high tide of Parisian life. But the aquatic panorama passing Blackwall was more characteristic of the great tideway of commerce, and infinitely richer in cosmopolitan romance. The towering East Indiaman, with high poop and spacious stern galley, the swift Aberdeen clipper, aspiring to beat the record in the tea trade, went lumbering by in tow of snorting and puffing tugs, mingled with 'passenger pakidges,' as Mrs. Gamp would have termed them, bound for Flemish and French ports from the Tower Wharf. Sails and cordage were then in the ascendant; there were no steel masts and wire shrouds; and when the clipper cleared the river and swept down channel, under a press of billowing canvas, from sky-scrapers to flying jib, she was a sight still cherished by nautical sentimentalists like Mr. Clark Russell. I remember more than one Blackwall dinner, where the other tables were occupied by officers of the mercantile marine, who prided themselves on being the smartest of seamen. They were giving themselves a send-off to the far East, or celebrating a happy return. What strikes me most forcibly now, in looking back, was the number of sprightly midshipmen, full of spirits doomed to be depressed, and of ambitions destined to be blighted. They were dressed in spruce uniforms of blue serge, and they tossed on to a side-table caps with a gold-laced band, embroidered with the

Union Jack. The crack ships in Green's or other great mercantile firms carried a dozen or so of decently born and educated boys. What became of them all? Even if they climbed to the cross-trees there was but a single command for a score of aspirants.

Greenwich was then in its glory : like Richmond it has declined since rail and train have made transit cheap and common. Whyte Melville has thrown himself heartily from vivid personal reminiscences into the description of the banqueting and the driving down in the drags, when his Tilbury Nogo fought the old waterman and got knocked out of time for his pains. Then from the beginning of the whitebait season, Ship, Trafalgar, and Crown and Sceptre were crowded to overflowing. It is long since the Trafalgar struck its colours—a sign of the melancholy collapse. Then if you did not take a sixpenny steamer,—the pleasantest way of a summer evening, when the river was not as high as a haunch of overhung venison,—you rattled down by street and road in some sort of conveyance. It was awkward work coaching a four-in-hand, or even piloting a lively pair in a phaeton among the crowds of coster barrows ; and it was a crucial test of nerve coming home of a Saturday night, if you could not confide in the skill and sobriety of your coachman. In those palmy days there were as many ostlers, helpers, and hangers-on about the hotels as waiters

—engaged for the short season—which is saying a great deal. There were as many carriages of all kinds, in the yards and before the door, as in the shops of Long Acre or the Baker Street bazaar. While you were kept waiting for dinner, as belated guests dropped in, the mudlarks scrambling for coppers under the balconies must have earned a working-man's wages. But the trains upset the jovial carriage traffic: steamers were chartered for special companies, like Her Majesty's ministers or the Fox Club, assembled for ministerial, political, or scientific banquets, and the Greenwich dinner gradually became more conventional and commonplace. Moreover, the gratifying development of industry had a good deal to do with it: with the smoke from workshops and factories the summer evenings were clouded with a murky haze like a thin London fog, and the atmosphere, flavoured with unsavoury odours, became foul as the water in which the whitebait were fattened.

In those early days an outing to Greenwich in June or July was delightful and refreshing. I fondly remember a little room at the Ship, to which, if possible, we always resorted. Panelled in heart of oak, it resembled a semi-circular galley-cabin. Half a dozen of us would seat ourselves facing the semi-circular open window. We did not go in for Lucullus-like luxury: there was a careful selection from the elaborate *menu*, with champagne or cyder cup, as the case might be,

according to the condition of our purses. But those modest gatherings of friends came to be popular in a certain set, like the literary breakfasts of Rogers or Lord Houghton; and there was no sort of difficulty in recruiting for them. Sometimes we picked up chance acquaintances, while zigzagging from pier to pier in steaming down river from Hungerford. I recollect a young soldier thus getting a lift in his profession by meeting a distinguished Indian officer who took a fancy to him, and forthwith took him on to his staff. And at one of the first of those visits to the Ship, I remember one of the cheeriest of companions sitting so brooding and self-absorbed, that we naturally rallied him. Plucky to foolhardiness, I had seen him plunge into a backswirl under a Highland waterfall, simply because he was told the insuck meant death. He had been jubilating for a week before because he was ordered to the Crimea in charge of a draft of artillery; that evening he was under the shadow of a foreboding, and when he thanked us for giving him a joyous send-off, he said gravely that he should never come back to us. His gloomy forebodings were realised, for on his first day in the trenches, a shell cut him in two.

I never hear anything of Purfleet now: in the olden time there used to be capital dining there near the powder mills, and on far more frugal terms than at Greenwich. And I fancy the Falcon

at Gravesend must have fallen upon evil times ; in any case it must have changed its *clientèle*. Steam has left the Falcon high and dry, as it knocked up the old posting-houses. In the days of the sails, all the East and West Indiamen, the Australian and Chinese clippers, when towed down the river, used to cast out their anchors off the town, and wait a night to pick up passengers and pilot. It has been a marvel to me that Dickens, who loved Gravesend so well, never made the Falcon the scene of one of his Christmas stories. Dickens had his home at Gadshill ; for three years I had a house at Farningham, and the Falcon had always a fascination for me. To compare great men with small, Dickens and I were both great walkers, and many a day we must both have lunched at the Falcon or at the Leather Bottel at Cobham. The Leather Bottel, with its low-roofed dining-room, its old oaken chairs and quaint engravings, was sacred to Dickens himself, to the memories of Tupman patching up a broken heart over a roasted fowl and a brimming tankard. But the Falcon was most ordinarily the inn of sad partings, and far less often of joyous reunions. There the outward-bound, sung by Mrs. Hemans, dropped anchor to have their last communications with the land. The old panes of cloudy glass in the coffee-room were scratched with initials of the dead and gone, and with all manner of inscriptions. The least sentimental of mortals could hardly look out



on the river without an uneasy impression that, like Harvey, he was meditating among the tombs.

Joys and sorrows are invariably intermingled, and within a mile or two of Gravesend was Rosherville, persistently obtruded on public notice as 'the place to spend a happy day.' When I had friends staying with me at Farningham, we often drove over to dine at the Falcon, and the sequel was a visit to Rosherville Gardens. Of a gala night they were a veritable carnival of Cockneydom: a vulgar travesty of the more fashionable Cremorne, with promenades illuminated by variegated lamps, with shaded alleys, where the young folk keeping company could lose themselves, with gin, punch, and beer for champagne and liqueurs, and with the inevitable bouquets of fireworks to wind up the evening. But Rosherville had one advantage over Cremorne in the really romantic background. The hermit at Cremorne had a cave constructed specially for him; the Rosherville recluse retired like the ascetics of the Thebaid to a cavern in the crumbling chalk, worn by the weather of the ages, or worked by the rude tools of prehistoric man. There you strolled about among the queerest contrasts of suggestive antiquity and modern vulgarity. Researches in the sequestered recesses of the chalk cliffs would have given Darwin or Professor Owen matter for speculation; in the foreground was an *omnium gatherum* of plaster and stucco, interesting in its way as the art

treasures of the Vatican, and much more likely to be appreciated by the holiday makers who paid their shillings and took their choice.

The metropolitan environs were then both rural and romantic. From Greenwich Observatory you looked over the Essex marshes to the rolling hill landscapes, with rarer visitations of obscuring fog, and from the terrace at Richmond there was the unrivalled view of the most enchanting of English valley scenery. In essentials I do not fancy that Richmond had greatly changed since John, Duke of Argyll and Greenwich, drove Jeanie Deans down to petition Queen Caroline, when the Scottish dairy-lass was chiefly impressed by the sleek kine grazing in the southern meadows. For the splash of paddles and the blowing off of steam, when going to Greenwich or Gravesend, one recalls the cheery echoes of light hoofs as the horses trotted home in the moonlight which silvered the secular oaks in Bushey Park, and irradiated casual glances of the winding river. For when a pleasant party had been got up beforehand, you went to Richmond by road. It might be on a drag, tooled by some expert whip, when the merry company was seated on the roof, and the grooms were carried as inside passengers. Or with sundry vehicles of various kinds, but all tolerably horsed, keeping well together, and rather given to racing in friendly rivalry. There was the appetising lounge on the hill before dinner, or the stroll in the park among



the deer and the bracken. The dinners, indeed, at the Star and Garter left something to desire ; and in the old establishment, since burned down, everything was on a modest scale, except the charges. In those days there were no cheap teas on the hill, at eighteenpence a head, to attract trippers and holiday-excursionists. The Star and Garter traded on its fashionable repute, but at the Castle, which has closed its doors, at the Talbot, or the Roebuck, you could dine more reasonably, and at least as well. Yet, if you cared for literary associations, there was this to be said for the Star and Garter, that it had figured in many a famous society novel. Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Lytton, Thackeray, Whyte Melville, Wilkie Collins, and Anthony Trollope had all taken down personally conducted parties to dine there. The Greville *Memoirs* and the *Creevey Papers* abound in Richmond reminiscences. When a scapegrace was running headlong on the race to ruin, or when an eligible was involving himself in an undesirable entanglement with some light of the stage or star of the ballet, their steps on the fatal down-grade invariably tended to Richmond. As for other hostelries up the river, I shall advert to them in the next chapter.

Fifty years ago the greatest metropolis of the world was the worst provided with hotels. Not many travellers from the Continent found their way thither, and they were for the most part

impecunious refugees or of the classes who were content with poor accommodation. Foreign princes and nobles, diplomatists *en voyage*, or wealthy country gentlemen, paying flying visits to the town, were sumptuously housed at the Clarendon or Mivart's. Fladong's, much frequented by naval officers in the war time, had been closed, and the Old Slaughter's in St. Martin's Lane, patronised by Major Dobbin and George Osborne, was a forgotten memory. Gay gentlemen of the army forgathered in Long's and Limmer's; houses where night was turned into day, and where, with the free and easy manners of the mess ante-room, no ordinary article of furniture was put to its proper use. It used to be said that at Limmer's—where John Collins, the head waiter, bequeathed his name to a seductive drink—the glass of gin and soda had the honours of the chair, while the man who gave the order sat on the mantelpiece. If a country cousin from the provinces had ventured into these hotels, or a *nouveaux riche* had risked himself in the coffee-room of the Clarendon, he would have found himself strangely out of his element. Civilians of the middle classes had to shift as best they could, though, unless there was something going on, such as the Great Exhibition, or the Christmas Cattle Show in Baker Street, they found fair comfort in cramped quarters. Morley's in Trafalgar Square trembled on the verge of the fashionable; and the Golden Cross

round the corner, of coaching fame, where Steerforth renewed acquaintance with 'little Copperfield,' was a comfortable house. I was once recommended by a man in an Oxford set who patronised it to the British in Cockspur Street. Carlyle of Inveresk mentions it in his reminiscences of one hundred and fifty years ago; but I was never tempted to go there again. The whole place, with its dark passages and stifling bedrooms, might have been conveniently accommodated in one of the grand saloons of the Metropole or Carlton. But I have still pleasant recollections of Hatchett's, the old White Horse Cellar in Piccadilly, where in former days all western coaches from the city pulled up. Partly because, although much in the rough, it evoked memories of those coaching times. There was a sanded floor in the carpetless coffee-room, and you breakfasted—one never dreamed of dining there—in the old-fashioned boxes, like uncovered bathing machines. There was always a certain scramble and bustle, though the breakfast might have a long idle day before him, as if the Bristol mail or the Exeter Quicksilver were to draw up, sharp to time, in fifteen minutes. Coffee and muffins came in with a rush; the toast had apparently been scorched on the surface; and the invariable beefsteak, though juicy, was thin, as if cut to be passed in haste over a glowing gridiron. Cox's in Jermyn Street, with its sundry suites of small private rooms, was

crowded with families from the country. I imagine that Anthony Trollope had it in his eye when he sketched Pawkins'—that 'capital, good house'—where Lord de Guest entertained his young friend Johnnie Eames, and Pawkins in person, in the solemn old style, brought in the silver soup-tureen. Lane's, up a *cul-de-sac* to the west of the Haymarket, was much affected by officers in the Company's service, and many a rather *recherché* little dinner was given me there by a cousin, who oscillated between that and the Blue Posts, and who worked hard for rheumatism, chronic liver complaint, and winters in southern Europe by his weakness for old port and for wading in his Deveron salmon water. Nor should I forget Fenton's in St. James's Street, much patronised by prosperous men of business from the provinces.

But Covent Garden was still the centre of the unsophisticated stranger's gay life in London. There were many hotels there, and some have renewed a youth which dates from the period of Sir John Fielding and the scarlet-vested Bow Street runners. Year after year I used to resort to the Tavistock, flourishing still, although utterly transmogrified. The servants seemed to have taken out a lease of immortality. The porter in the hall—Pickwick we used to call him—never forgot a friend or a face; he welcomed you with a broad smile, handing over any letters that might be waiting. The boots rushed out, grinning recog-

nition, and the grey-haired head waiter consulted your tastes and anticipated your orders, like John at the Slaughter's when Major Dobbin turned up from Madras. It must be owned that the back bedrooms were gloomy, and that in the brighter front rooms rest might have been broken by the bustle in the Market, but at that age one slept sound. I liked the primitive larder on the first landing place, with the uncooked joints, the salmon, the lobsters, and the fruit tarts: I liked the six o'clock *table d'hôte*—a convenient hour for the theatre-goers, with everything of the choicest, from the mulligatawny or oxtail to the Stilton and celery: above all, it was pleasant to come down to the cheery breakfast-room, where for the moderate fixed charge you could call for anything you pleased in reason, and where the side-tables were loaded with Scottish profusion. As lavish was the provision of the *Times* and other morning journals: the newsboys came towards midday to sweep them up and pass them on. Characteristic of the room were the basin breakfast cups without handles, the plates of water-cress, the luscious buttered toast and muffins. At the Tavistock they never bothered you with a bill: the sum total was inscribed on a tiny card, and if you cared to check it, there were the books in the clerk's box. I fancy no one ever did care to check it: there was confidence between host and guests. To this day, when in sentimental

mood, I love a stroll under the piazza, inhaling the odours of crushed oranges and rotting cabbage leaves.

The railways brought the revolution. The growing influx of visitors was to be accommodated, and the railway companies saw their way to encouraging traffic. What were then considered great caravansaries were built at Paddington and Euston, and they paid. They not only attracted travellers but London residents. An old bachelor, a connection of mine, was among the first, permanently to engage a bedroom at the Great Western, locked up for him when he went his annual round of visits, for he was welcome in many a country house. Now, as we know, in the matter of hotels, London shows the way to the capitals of Europe.



## CHAPTER IV

### IN LONDON LODGINGS

IN London below the upper bridges, the changes are transformation. When I first knew it as a temporary resident, the hotels, as I said, were poor and few, or aristocratic and ruinously expensive. The bachelor quarters were in St. James's, between Piccadilly and Pall Mall. There you were within a stone's throw or a short cab-fare of the clubs, the dining places, and the theatres. For twenty years I had my *pied à terre* in Bury Street. The man who took me in and did for me was a typical representative of a class. Retired butlers or saving footmen united themselves in wedlock with housekeepers or ladies' maids, and went in for keeping lodgings. When frugal and intelligent, they generally did well: many of them, as indeed is often the case now, had a good country connection, like Mrs. Ridley who entertained the Rev. Charles Honeyman and was victimised by Fred Bayham. My friendly host had been a courier, and had made a wide circle of acquaintance in the course of innumerable foreign tours. He was a man of substance, used frequently to consult me about his small investments, and though I never



tried it, as I happen to know, he could afford to give long credit when he could reckon on the essential solvency of his lodger. Everything was managed on a liberal scale, and as the friend who recommended me to the place remarked, you might change your boots four times in the day and never hear a grumble. The courier's wife had been a lady's maid, but had she been a *cordon bleu* the kitchen could not have been better conducted. He did not profess to get up dinners, though when he could be persuaded the guests had no cause of complaint. As for the breakfasts, it would have been difficult to beat them, and I believe the special dishes were the work of his own hands. For an inveterate continental rover like myself, he had a special kindness; and when he brought in the tray with the morning's *Times*, I always looked out for an awakening of associations. A *plat* of macaroni transported you to Naples, and Fortnum and Mason round the corner were laid under contribution to carry you to Rhineland, to Pithiviers or the Gironde. The consequence was that his rooms were run upon. I always paid a retaining fee for my own, a modest but spacious apartment *au troisième*, with a curtain screening off the bed and the bath. There when I made up my traps for a foreign tour, I left the rest of my worldly belongings for Brown—as I may call him—to pack; and he used to buy endless second-hand portmanteaus for their stowage. He struck

at last and amicably told me I must make a clearance, and indeed it was high time. He called up one of these peripatetic merchants in old clothes, who used to go prowling along Bury Street, shouting down the area railings, and I left them busied over the bargaining, for which he would insist on honourably accounting.

One day, dining in Edinburgh with an old acquaintance, I met his elder brother, who had come home from India with a fortune. He asked me about London lodgings. I saw how he appreciated the oyster soup and the crimped salmon, and recommended him to try Brown's. He came, he saw, he took the second floor, and there he remained for a dozen of years, dying in the grim four-poster in the back bedroom. Lodgings in Bury Street are not a lively place to die in, listening to the chimes of the clock of St. James's, Piccadilly, and bethinking yourself when the bell will toll for your own departure. But the lonely invalid's passage was made as smooth as might be, by the affectionate attentions of the courier and his helpmate. The first floor for four-fifths of the year was the residence of a young aristocrat who had done a good deal of æsthetic decoration there on his own account. That is to say, it was his residence when at home, for he was perpetually absent on rounds of visits. And in the season he invariably migrated to more fashionable quarters in Half-Moon Street, for Piccadilly then drew a

sharp dividing line between fashion and affluent or respectable Bohemianism. The day came when poor Brown died himself; and the announcement of the news gave me a sad shock, when I drove up one morning from the Tower Wharf where the *Baron Osy* from Antwerp had landed me. The widow flitted; the house was sold; and so I lost the only home I have ever known in London. In after years I went from sentimental motives to take a bed there, and thought myself happy in securing the familiar bedroom. The house had been burnished up externally; a brisk butler opened the door with the bright brass plate, and a flaunting maid brought a tarnished flat candle and a jug of tepid water, when I came in to dress for dinner. Now I was only a night casual and No. 9, and I had every opportunity for meditating on the changes through the night watches. Never even in Sicily or Syria have I been worse worried by families of bugs of all ages and sizes. The sheets and chintz curtains were splashed with gore. When getting into a pair of badly blackened boots, I recalled the mirror-like polish by which you might have shaved, and took a last farewell of the desecrated lodgings.

Everywhere about the capitalist or the speculative builder has been busy. There are piles of residential chambers in Duke Street and Bury Street, and the old directory maker would be as much abroad as the old *flâneur*, if he took a stroll up Piccadilly.

There were no clubs to the west of St. James's Street, till the Junior Athenæum was started at the corner of Down Street and Piccadilly. In comparatively recent years, the Berkeley, among the first of the sumptuous new restaurants, with its set dinners and *recherché* luncheons, was reared on the site of the White Horse Cellar. Lady Palmerston was still receiving the *élite* of the Whig party, and recruiting for it in receptions at Cambridge House, which has since become a *succursale* of the Junior and the Rag. Apsley House—I can remember the iron shutters, the epigrammatic retort of the Duke to the violence of an oblivious rabble—had not been overtopped by the golden palace of the Rothschilds. Hamilton Place was a quiet *cul-de-sac*, only disturbed by the echoes of the congested traffic between St. George's Hospital and the narrows leading to Park Lane. The houses in the Lane itself, though suggestive of luxury and affluence, so as to point the diatribes of the demagogues who smashed the railings of the Park, were comparatively unpretentious. The landowners were still the aristocracy of wealth, for it was before the multi-millionaires had struck oil in America, or exploited the gold treasures of Australia and the Transvaal.

Since then the ornamental gardener has done much to beautify the Park with flower beds, blazing with tulips, geraniums, and pelargoniums. But I liked it better when it was less carefully

tended, for comparative neglect reminded one of the simplicity of the country. And since then many a stately tree has come down, both there and in Kensington Gardens, and quaint summer-houses, where sentimental lovers had assignations for summer evenings, have disappeared. The gates were guarded against public conveyances, and so far the democracy had a genuine grievance. On the other hand there was no church parade, and they missed the opportunity of staring at celebrities, with whose looks and domestic habits the illustrated and society journals have since made them familiar. When I first knew the Park, few people turned out to ride of a fine morning, except for fresh air and exercise. Then the before-breakfast ride became the fashion; and a very good thing it was, for it got the young folk out of bed, after late dances and midnight suppers. It freshened their complexions through the season, and kept them going till they changed the scene to the country or the continental baths.

But my brightest recollections of the Park of those days are of an exceptionally severe winter. The frost was as intense, if not so enduring, as when the Thames was hard-frozen from bank to bank. I had just come south from Scotland in time to change curling stones for skates, and seldom have I gone in for such prolonged exertion, as was only possible in the exhilarating cold. After skating all the day on the Serpentine, with



perhaps an occasional suburban excursion to the Welsh Harp, or the ponds at the Crystal Palace, you came back with ravenous appetite for a hasty dinner at the club, with a pint of champagne or a flask of burgundy. Then shaking off somnolence, like a giant refreshed, you were whirled in a hansom behind a slipping horse to the passage hard by the Knightsbridge Barracks. The Park was lighted with a lurid glare, the reflection of hundreds of smoking torches. For several days the ice was in perfect condition, for the orange peel and the débris of other comestibles were regularly swept away by gangs of frozen-out sweepers. It was a saturnalia where all sorts and conditions were mingled; from the ragged vagabond who screwed on your skates, to the beggar who appealed to your charity when you sought temporary rest on a chair. You could even afford to be in charity with the pickpockets who hustled you, for as at the prize fight you had wisely left your valuables at home, and if they found any small change by searching your pockets, you made them heartily welcome to it.

To go back to the pleasant summer mornings, we used often to prolong the ride from Rotten Row to Lords'. Then the arrangements were as primitive as when the fielders turned out in tight raiment and top-hats, and batters and wicket-keepers took no special precautions against the steady underhand bowling. You rode in, took



your seat on a backless bench, and held your own horse who stood quietly grazing behind you. St. John's Wood was still a suburban solitude, of doubtful reputation, but with Cytherean retreats where apocryphal respectability often led a double existence. I remember one forenoon pulling up face to face with an elderly acquaintance, coming out of one of those eligible cottage residences. He was a doctor in fashionable practice who might have been visiting a patient anywhere, and had it not been for his blushing and embarrassment, I should never have dreamed of suspecting evil. As it was, he gave himself so thoroughly away, that I believe I could have blackmailed him to any extent.

Eastward from the Union Club the changes have been so great that I have wellnigh forgotten how things used to be. One of my boyish recollections is of Farrance's on the south side, famous for ices and pastry, and for the fascinating young women behind the counters. There was but one narrow thoroughfare southward—the crossing-sweeper found it almost as lucrative as that before the Bank—where now are the multiplicity of spacious crossways on the slope, as perilous to pedestrians as the Place de la République, with the incapable Paris coachmen. Northumberland House, the last of the great historic mansions of the Strand, had not yet been sold for a million, more or less; and the Percy lion on the roof,

with rampant tail, always attracted little groups of country gazers. Nothing could be quieter or duller than the side streets, ending on the mud-banks of the tidal river, as they were then. They were chiefly populated by lodging-house keepers like Mrs. Lirriper, by rather shady private hotels, by struggling solicitors with a sprinkling of usurers, and by cook-shops. It was an innovation when George Smith started the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a West End journal, 'written by gentlemen for gentlemen,' bringing life and briskness into Northumberland Street, which nevertheless was still a *cul-de-sac*. Since the brothers Adam built the Adelphi, which proved a financial failure, the builder and educated architect had found little to do in that quarter. Even the Government Offices were disgraceful survivals. I remember often groping my way about the old War Office, as much a warren of winding passages and darksome rooms as the venerable Savoy before it was pulled down. Naturally such a dilapidated rookery was a nest of abuses, and if youths of fashion might grumble at uncomfortable quarters, they consoled themselves by being seldom looked up and having next to nothing to do. And I fancy things must have been managed in a singularly free and easy fashion. Once I had come to town for a continental tour with a captain in a light cavalry regiment. He had some interest and a good record, and counted so confidently on getting a

month or six weeks' leave that all our plans were settled. The answer to his written application was a curt refusal. Intensely disgusted, he did not despair. He went next day to interview an underling, who told him it should be all right, and he would come to dine with us and report. So he did and so it was, and we had a jovial evening at the Rag.

Hard by was another decrepit survival of the past, Hungerford Market, a wooden construction of low bulging buildings, with galleries and overhanging eaves. It was fragrant with the smell of stale shellfish and the odours from the booths and stalls of small tradesmen. It was there that David Copperfield or young Charles Dickens served his apprenticeship to the blacking warehouse. But it was a bustling place all the same, for there was constant coming and going to the floating pier and the penny river boats. Moreover, turning to the stairs on the right, for another penny or a halfpenny, you could cross the river by the slender suspension bridge which now spans the Avon opposite Clifton Hot Wells.

Hungerford Market was disreputable, though not unpicturesque in its decay, yet evidently doomed. But Leicester Square was simply a scandal; and it was a marvel how that dreary abomination of desolation could be left in the midst of the wealthiest city in the world. There was a headless statue in a wilderness of weeds,

and the silence of the night was disturbed by the caterwauling of starving cats on the rampage. From time to time the jungle had been cleared for dioramas and exhibitions of various kinds, but they invariably came to grief, for the place seemed accursed. And the morals of the vicinity left everything to desire, for it was a modern sanctuary—a preserve for political and criminal refugees from continental justice, always shadowed by agents of the secret police and the objects of urgent demands for extradition. In comparison the female society of the Haymarket was pure and refined. I have said something of the company you saw in the restaurants. Berthollini's had a great renown in its time among English Bohemians; it was celebrated in verse by Albert Smith in his 'Pottle of Strawberries'; and as you wandered away into the back streets towards Soho and Clerkenwell, the eating-houses shaded down from the cheap and mean to the villainous.

Then a great reformer and philanthropist came to the rescue. Albert Grant had cast his Jewish gabardine and adopted a Christian name; he had begged or bought a German title; and by his rare skill in promoting and company running had laid the shaky foundations of a colossal fortune. But his credit had been blown upon, as he protested, by calumny, and in the art of self-advertising he was far in advance of the age. It occurred to him as a happy stroke of business to present a renovated

Leicester Square to London. The Metropolitan Board of Works rose readily to the offer; the scheme was carried out regardless of cost, and a day was fixed for the opening ceremony. I happened to be dining with Mr. Delane of the *Times*, when he asked me to go and report the proceedings. I went accordingly, and a queer scene it was, both to see at the time and to look back upon after the collapse of the Machiavelli of finance. The Baron, sleek, smiling, and sandy-haired, ruddy of complexion like David, and swelling with satisfied pride and self-importance, stood forward on the platform. A capital speech he made, for he was a born orator, and he showed when he fought his own case in the courts, and was highly complimented by the judge, that had he turned his attention to the law, he might have aspired to seat himself on the Woolsack. The most characteristically suggestive point was his remarking casually that he had brought his boys up from Eton to assist at a scene they would long remember. As perhaps they might, though with mingled feelings. For the public benefactor had his bitter enemies, and all about, outside the garden railings, newsboys were shouting over satirical broadsheets, illustrated with grave-slabs and headstones, commemorative of the Baron's fatal fiascoes which had ruined confiding investors by the thousands. Anyhow, whatever the donor's motive, the gift has done a world of good to the neighbourhood, giving



a recreation ground to the feeble and sickly, and a play garden to the children of the slums. More than that, the enterprising promoter gave a start to speculations by which he was not to benefit. The square associated with Newton and Reynolds, with Dr. Burney and the mysterious authorship of *Evelina*, is now a centre of the theatrical world, and adorned by music halls of Moorish architecture, paying dividends from twenty to thirty per cent.

I might be tempted to ramble on to the top of the Haymarket, and to Shaftesbury Avenue, where the transformations have been more striking than anywhere else, but I may as well travel eastwards, and sample the city. Forty or fifty years ago, few self-respecting men dreamed of taking an omnibus—omnibuses were slow, they were filthy, they were not cheap, for sixpence was the fare from Pall Mall to St. Paul's—and the eternal stoppages, with the squaring of complacent policemen, were standing subjects of satire in *Punch*. The crawling four-wheeler was an intolerable trial of the patience, and was chiefly relegated to old parties with heavy boxes, or to the sight-seeing country cousins who were ruthlessly and remorselessly victimised. Hansoms were less common then than now, and you gained little by taking them, for they were always being caught up in crushes, and could seldom put on the pace. If you safely shot the cross currents at Charing Cross, there was always



a long block at Temple Bar, and indefinite delays at the bottom of Ludgate Hill. Then you had to negotiate crowded Cheapside, for there was no broad thoroughfare through Cannon Street. Consequently when the weather was fine, and I seldom went cityward except under favourable weather circumstances, I generally took the penny boat at Hungerford.

There was no place I visited more habitually than the old East India House in Leadenhall Street: to my fancy it was always enveloped with a gorgeous halo of oriental romance. The reason of my going and of my free admission was that a bosom friend was a confidential clerk and private secretary to his father, a director with sundry stars to his name in the catalogue of stockholders, and repeatedly chairman in critical circumstances. It was that gentleman who was at the helm when Lord Ellenborough was recalled. A keen sportsman, he used to take me out snipe-shooting as a boy. He had the oddest trick of throwing his hand to his hat, before raising his gun; but when he did bring the gun to his shoulder he seldom missed, for he had served an apprenticeship in the rice swamps of Bengal. I well remember his telling his brother, when sitting down to luncheon on the skirts of an Aberdeenshire bog—his brother, also a stockholder, was advising caution—that his mind was made up, that the viceroy must come back, and that he was ready to carry the war into

the enemy's camp. He spoke as if he had the directorate in his pocket, and I verily believe he had, for he was a man of no ordinary sagacity, and of indomitable will.

He and that brother of his were typical men. In the palmy days of the Company, it was not only on shore that fortunes were to be made by civilians shaking the pagoda tree. Both had been in the Company's naval service. One married early and retired in comfortable circumstances; the other held on a few years longer and retired comparatively rich. Then the *Lady Melville* or the *Lord Clive* was a cross between a castle and a floating warehouse, with its Dutch-built poop, its quarter galleries and its capacious holds. On the homeward voyage the holds were always richly freighted: there were bars of bullion, there were bales of silks and cases of indigo, and sealed packages of diamonds were locked away in the captain's cabin. The captain had his commission on the value of the cargo, and with his officers, according to their degree, was privileged to ship a certain quantity of goods. His venture was compact and precious; and through friends in India to whom he could do many a good turn, he had always means of investing his savings to the best advantage. Many a quaint *souvenir* of their voyages they had brought home. There were roots fantastically fashioned with slight touches, into beasts, birds, and fishes; idols in ivory, silken hangings, and

emblazoned scrolls ; with carvings in jade, picked up for a song in the bazaars of Shanghai or Canton, which would fetch a great price nowadays.

So it may be imagined what wealth of treasure was stored in the India House. It was a museum, besides, of trophies won in memorable battles and sea-fights, and of the offerings which humbled potentates had brought to the feet of the merchant adventurers. There were costumes of state, and antiquated suits of chain armour ; an arsenal of semi-barbarous weapons from gingals, matchlocks and stinkpots to sabres, swords and daggers of the finest tempered steel, with sheaths inlaid with Canarese gold work, and hilts, made for small, nervous hands, rich with uncut gems. There was always a scent, or one fancied there was, of sandal-wood and oriental spices, which lent a halo of romance to the drudgery going forward, conducted with as business-like methods as at Lloyd's or the Bank of England. Yet you were brought back to the present when you crossed in the passages boys bearing trays which were not laden with oriental sweets, but with chops from the pot-house round the corner, flanked with pewters of bitter or stout. The most imposing man on the premises was the gold-laced giant who mounted guard at the portal. As my visits were frequent when in town, I thought it well to tip him ; but I can never forget the hesitation with which I tendered the *douceur*, or my relief when he smilingly condescended to accept it.

That porter must have been pensioned when the rule of the Company was transferred to the Crown. But in after years my connection with the East was renewed when I made acquaintance with sundry directors of the Peninsular and Oriental. Leadenhall Street was still the centre of East Indian trade, and notably of the passenger traffic. But already its practical monopoly was being threatened by engineering science and keen competition. When I went out to the opening of the Suez Canal on the *Delta* with other guests of the Khedive, it was already reconstructing its fleet and reconsidering its arrangements. The old *Delta* was one of the last of the paddle steamers, and a comfortable and roomy craft she was. We had a placid passage from Marseilles to Alexandria, and not a soul failed to turn up at every meal. I may remark, parenthetically, that the idea was to leave her at Alexandria, as it was doubted whether she did not draw too much water for the new canal; but afterwards the directors decided that they ought to show their flag in the Red Sea, and they dared the passage successfully. Meantime, after a kindly offer of a shake-down on the deck of his crowded steam yacht from Sir John Pender, associated with regenerating Egypt by electrical enterprise, I transhipped myself to the *Newport*, the Government surveying ship, where they turned out a beer cask to make room for a bed in the saloon. The *Newport*, commanded by my connec-

tion, Captain Nares—the Sir George of the Arctic Expedition—was overcrowded with captains and flag officers of the Mediterranean fleet. Many of them have since been admirals, and more than one found a watery grave with Tryon, who, I think, was one of our company.

Ships of the *Delta* class were built for the comfort of passengers; freight was by no means a secondary consideration, but then it was of great value in small bulk. Silks and spices could be compactly stowed away. In the newer vessels, cargoes of cotton were consigned to capacious holds, and the Suez Canal would never have paid had it not been for the simultaneous introduction of the compound engine. At the same time, more severe competition lowered the passage money, and stricter economy became the word of command. In the palmy days the Company charged pretty much what they pleased, and in all the commissariat arrangements there was a princely disregard of detail. At the many meals, sherry and claret were served *ad libitum*; you might douche yourself with brandy and soda or Bass as you lounged in the camp chair under the awnings on deck. Now the fares are cut down; the second-class accommodation is infinitely improved; and though you may call for what liquor you like, you have to pay for it. These changes may be all for the better, but one loved the old sense of luxurious pleasure yachting. What is more questionable

is the substitution of Lascars for Europeans in the crews, though I remember Morris, one of the oldest captains in the service, warmly advocating it, when he showed me over what he considered his model steamer at Alexandria. But Morris was an enthusiast. Often after that Egyptian trip, I enjoyed the hospitality of the Board in their headquarters in Leadenhall Street at luncheon time; and a privilege it was to lunch in such intellectual company, with a rare variety of oriental experiences. But at these simple luncheons frugality reigned, and the Board of that wealthy and prosperous Company, all men of affluence or ample means, set their subordinates a laudable example of economy.



## CHAPTER V

### THE THAMES ABOVE BRIDGES

IT is a natural transition from London hotels to the Thames. What pleasant times we used to have up the river, when the house-boat was a rarity and when the swans were never scared by the steam launch. The swan hopper's barge, slow and stately, with its gorgeous display and its associations with the venerable city guilds and immemorial custom, was a different thing altogether and suited to the suburban river scenery as the Bucentaur to Venetian canals. Among my brightest recollections is that of a July and August spent cruising between old Windsor and Kingston. It was a singularly dry summer, intensely hot, and we lived in flannels. There was no fear of the rain upsetting the daily arrangements. We were four: two to pull, one to steer, and the supernumerary to go along the bank at a dog-trot, with a terrier and a gaunt mongrel, who had attached himself to the party and fattened on good living. Our quarters were at the nautically named Ship of Lower Halliford, and if the accommodation was somewhat cramped, we could not have been more comfortable. The day began with a dip in the

river, when one of the Rosewells, a family of Halliford boatmen, who punted us to the bathing place, took the opportunity of examining his eel pots, and the results were not without a personal interest for us. Breakfast in the little parlour, with the window wide open over the riverside road, was not the least enjoyable hour of the day. There was a pretty clean sweep of the well-spread table, and especially the crusts of home-baked loaves disappeared, the crumb being left to make into toast, which never was made, or was given away in generous charity. After breakfast, and over pipes, Mr. Stone, our worthy host, was called into consultation as to the more solemn business of dinner. The fish cart used always to come up punctually, at a canter, when we made our own selections, ranging from salmon to smelts. That weighty matter off our minds, the long summer day was devoted to relaxation. When we were equally divided as to going up or down, the question was settled by the spin of a shilling. Really, it mattered little, though perhaps it was more satisfactory to begin with the pull against the stream, drifting downwards with the current as the shadows were declining. Either way, you could not go wrong. The Thames has a placid beauty of its own, and everywhere the banks, even when from the boat you lost sight of the beauties, were brightened by associations. Upwards there was Shepperton, at an inconvenient distance and too

near to Halliford, for Mrs. Steer who kept the inn was famous for her cookery. It used to be a favourite resort of Albert Smith, who had a cottage at Chertsey; and in the garden we made acquaintance with the great showman's mother. The old lady had rather gone off her head, but the worthy landlady made her welcome for the sake of old times. In unconventional costume, we used regularly to attend morning service of a Sunday in the picturesque old church, and seldom have I profited more than by the ministrations of the excellent parson. It was luxurious to listen to the songs of praise and words of power, to see the glorious sunshine filtering through the panes of stained glass, and to know that in the afternoon you would be worshipping in the sunshine of the open.

In those days Mr. Lindsay, a great shipowner, who was an authority in the House of Commons on seafaring and commercial subjects, had a charming maritime residence there, and the borders that fringed his lawns were blazing with geraniums and fuchsias. He used to have Cabinet ministers down with him for the 'weeks' ends,' which had not then come into general observance, and more than once we were indiscreet enough to pull 'easy all' when we recognised Mr. Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, in confidential talk with him. Chertsey and the neighbourhood were associated with the burglarious expedition of Bill Sikes and

flash Toby Crackit, and Laleham, the suburban seat of Lord Lucan, with memories of Dr. Arnold and *Tom Brown's School Days*; for at Laleham we were naturally reminded of Rugby, and one of the quartette was an old intimate of Tom Hughes. In after years I knew 'Tom Brown' tolerably well, and had many a pleasant chat with him in the subterraneous smoking-room of the Athenæum. Also at Margate, where he swore by the invigorating air, and whither I often took my walks, by way of Broadstairs and Kingsgate from Ramsgate. And there were few men I loved more than his brother George, with whom I golfed and forgathered, season after season, at Pau, and with whom, and our common friend, Ferdinand St. John, we have whipped the water, rather than caught trout, in many a tempting emerald-coloured stream of the Pyrenees. But the evening chat—we never retired early—more than atoned for the disappointments of the day. St. John had been everywhere, knew everybody, was at home in all useful European languages, and had brilliant talents which should have raised him to high distinction, had he not, to his subsequent regret, perversely wrapped them up in a napkin. As *raconteur* and *causeur*, he scarcely yielded to Charles Lever, who suggested that he should give his autobiography to the world under the title of 'Devious Ways and Loose Recollections.' George Hughes was more reserved, but he brimmed over with appreciative humour,

and had a happy turn for amateur theatricals and charades. He never hinted at it, but I have reason to believe that he collaborated with his brother in the Rugby book which has made Thomas an English classic.

Lord Lucan was the lord of the manor where we used to lie, after luncheon, and smoke under the trees. As it chanced, when it was my habit to lunch at the Carlton, as an early bird—indulging in something like a French *déjeuner*—I always secured the corner table at a window on Pall Mall, and his lordship invariably occupied the next one. The gallant old field marshal, the hero of the Heavy Cavalry Charge, cared little about Arnold, but had a love for his family seat and the scene of the doctor's early labours. He was a delightful and informing acquaintance, but it was difficult to draw him on the subject of the Crimean campaign, though he discussed *cuisine* and other subjects with knowledgeable zest. But though instructive, he was the most embarrassing of neighbours. Painfully deaf, he spoke in stentorian tones, and expected any modest man he was conversing with to respond in similar key. Once I happened to be relating a dramatic incident of saving a kitten from a bull-dog at Laleham, when our terrier and mongrel had cut into the fight. That day the dining-room was extraordinarily crowded, as a great debate was coming on, and it was one of the rare occasions when Lord Beaconsfield had condescended to drop

in with Mr. Montague Corrie for lunch. As I began to retell the tale in a louder voice, there chanced to be a lull, so I had more of an audience than I desired or expected.

But this is one of my innumerable digressions. At Chertsey we would diverge from the river to the Cricketers; at Staines we used to pull up at the Packhorse; its name suggestive of traffic in the olden time, when the Berkshire roads were sloughs and the lanes were flooded. It was a quaint and modest hostelry, in high repute for its ale and mutton chops. Experts in ale—and we were all of us familiar with the Trinity Audit—used to swear by the beer at the Bells of Ouseley. To me it always seemed a trifle hard, suggesting the cider they used to serve from the cask in earthenware jugs at the Brittany *tables d'hôte*. I may have been mistaken, for no haunts on the river were more frequented by connoisseurs of all classes than the taproom and parlours of that somewhat sequestered inn. Bargemen and swell boating men gathered on the benches before the door, and it was largely patronised by gipsies from caravans on the adjacent commons, and by the passing tramp. I recollect one free fight in which we interposed at great personal risk, when two Romany ladies took to pulling bonnets, and their swarthy mates, who at first looked indifferently on, began to show an interest in the affair which threatened serious hostilities. But considering that the rural constabulary were con-



spicuous by their absence, and that rough chaff was constantly flying about, it was wonderful how little trouble there was on the river. The temper of the bargees had not been soured by steam-launches interfering with their steering, or house-boats getting foul of the towing-ropes. Alongside of the fragile outrigger in the locks they always made themselves pleasant—in the expectation of the price of a pint—though still morbidly sensitive to the time-honoured query of, ‘Who ate the puppy-pie under Marlow Bridge?’

Maidenhead and Marlow were the objects of more distant excursions, with the Red Lion at Henley as a goal, where we sometimes passed a couple of nights. There was no greater contrast than that between the Henley of the Regatta and the Henley of other weeks of the year. The drowsy little town was nodding, if not asleep. No longer were the echoes awoken by the horns of the coach guards, or by the shouts down the stable yards for ‘first and second pairs out.’ But you seldom failed in a fine season to find company at the Lion, of the best sort and inclined to be sociable. Skindle’s at Maidenhead, with its verdant lawn and beds of geraniums, was a delightful place to lounge away an afternoon, till the lotus-eating torpor grew on you, and you were loath to slip the painter. There was no club hard by and no noisy racket, though of a Sunday it was rather a place to be shunned, for hard-worked men of letters from the

borders of Bohemia were apt to hold high festival there with their ladies.

There is many a picturesque mansion on the river banks, but perhaps none is more attractive than Bisham. We had the fortune to find hospitable welcome there—one of us was heir-presumptive to the Abbey and estates—and the hospitality was free and easy as any boating man, whose ordinary wear was loose flannels, could desire. On the great oaken table in the ancient hall were the massive tankards of home-brewed ale, which rather stimulated thirst, while professing to quench it. There were no rules as to strictly correct costume for dinner, always served punctually to the hour, when the guests walked in to take their seats, though the master might be late, as was very often the case. The venerable mansion was associated with the two great baronial families who had transmitted their names and manors to 'the last of the barons.' There was of course a ghost, dating from Elizabethan days, for one of the Hobdays walked, and though I forget the details, I do remember that there was some odd association with child murder and a blotted copy-book. The lady never disturbed my slumbers, and when we rose it was to take a header into the Thames from a bathing-house shrouded in luxuriant shrubbery. From the square, grey tower—there was a tradition that a cat had been tossed from the battlements to alight safely on its feet on the gravel

walk—there was an enchanting view over hill, dale, and valley, and the long sweep under the sheltering ridge of the amphitheatre of beech-woods. There Shelley had boated through many a summer's day, meditating sonnets to the sky-larks, as they soared skyward, or dreaming over *The Revolt of Islam*, which he composed in great part while, dropping his sculls off Bisham, he left the boat to drift. The exile, on one of his returns to England, had his home at Marlow, across the river, and the proscription of the atheist and socialist was so general, that his only friend and acquaintance was Love Peacock, whom he had tempted to Marlow—a poet like himself and the author of those inspired snatches of song in *The Misfortunes of Elphin* and *Maid Marian*. Lapped in the folds of the beechen amphitheatre, on its sloping lawn, stood the vicarage, where Peacock's Dr. Opimian might have been content to settle down, renouncing dreams of deaneries and bishoprics. If the parson were foolish enough to change the scene in summer, he could always let that ideal Paradise for a fabulous rent—from thirty to forty guineas a week. As for the old-fashioned Dutch garden of the Abbey, scarcely above the river level, with its encircling moat flooded in any overflow, with the old-fashioned hollyhocks, dahlias, and sunflowers, it was a blaze of brilliant colour. Nowhere have I seen brighter or fresher tints on the gladiolas, save at Inverewe in Western

Ross-shire, where the terraces were watered by balmy rains tempered by the genial flow of the Gulf Stream.

Scarcely less attractive was the downward pull from Halliford to Kingston, the county town of Surrey. Again you were among the suburban haunts of more or less illustrious men, who had their summer residences near to town before the days of the railway. Love Peacock and Leigh Hunt had lived at Halliford: on a garden terrace just below the village used to sit wrapt in her book a girl in a scarlet jacket, who was pointed out as Hunt's granddaughter. One of the homes of Harold Skimpole, where, like the poet of the *Seasons*, he may have nibbled, with hands behind his back, at the sunny sides of the peaches, must have been still in the family. At Walton, with its long, low bridge of many arches, stretching over marshy strips of meadowland, periodically submerged—a scene often transferred to the walls of the Academy—Mr. Sturgis, a partner in Baring's, then in the full flush of high credit and cautious prosperity, kept open house for Transatlantic guests, who hunted up the history and romance of the old country from Windsor Forest to Hampton Court. Then there was Sunbury, reminding one of Gilbert White's notes upon swallows and their hybernation—the birds were always flashing by the boat and twittering over the reed beds, while the great black swifts flew scream-

ing round the church tower—and of Barham of the *Ingoldsby Legends*, who had often rowed there before us. There was Thames Ditton, where we would land to lunch at the Swan, associated with Scott's correspondence with Lord Montague, and with Theodore Hook, who was fond of going punt fishing there, with sufficient ground-bait for himself on board, and superfluity of claret and cold punch. There was Moulsey Hurst, of renown in the palmy days of the prize-ring, when chariots and four, bedecked with the colours of Cribb or Molyneux—Captain Barclay or Berkeley Craven seated beside the bruisers they had trained or backed—brought the swells of St. James's to the scene of old English 'sport,' which, when not interrupted by the presence of some officious magistrate, often ended in a fight more free than was contemplated. I was versed in the vivid descriptions of those days by the amusing *Memoirs* of Archibald Constable the publisher, when his partner Hunter, who had the quarrel with Scott, drove down with 'Maule,' afterwards Lord Panmure, and 'the Bailie,' which was the sobriquet of Hunter's sire. But forty years ago the glories of the ring were gone—as Borrow remarks in *Lavengro*, rottenness had crept into the heart of it—the once popular *Bell's Life* was on the decline, and the office of the umpire was even more perilous than it had always been, now that 'crosses' were common, and the whips that strove



to keep the ring could hardly hold boisterous roughs in order. Yet it still published columns of challenges, intimating houses where money was to be put down at a series of convivial meetings, and where the office was to be obtained by the initiated on the eve of the battle. Ben Caunt was at home at the Coach and Horses; Jem Burn, who was in the way of dropping into poetry like Silas Wegg, had 'lush to cool you, when your coppers were hot,' at the Rising Sun; and Nat Langham, champion of the middle weights, was giving lessons to the nobility and gentry in the noble art of self-defence. But the police were ever on the trail of those half-tolerated law-breakers; the forlorn gentlemen of the fancy were forced to find their way at unholy hours to the fogs of the Essex marshes, when the consumption of fiery liquors before the ordinary breakfast hour was portentous. However dark the impending affair might have been kept, those outings of East-end roughs often ended in a fiasco, and treachery hedged unsatisfactory bets by playing into the hands of the common enemy. To my shame, be it said, I once made one of such a party, when the fight was a cross, and the expedition in every sense 'a sell.' I had been wise enough to leave watch and gold at home, but my loose silver had escaped through a cut in the trouser pocket, and I lost a breast pin which would not have fetched a shilling when it was pawned.



Moulsey Hurst, by the way, has other memories. It was almost as old a golfing ground as Blackheath, if it had no Royal Club and was not so generally frequented, being less accessible from the city. When Garrick had his villa at Hampton, Jupiter Carlyle, with John Home, the author of *Douglas* and confidential man-of-all-work to the omnipotent Lord Bute, drove down with a party of Scots to spend a day with the great actor. They met the rector, Mr. Black, who owed his benefice to having initiated the Duke of Cumberland in the game. Before adjourning to play a foursome on the Hurst, Carlyle astonished the natives by the skill with which he sent a ball through an archway under the highroad intersecting the garden. Garrick was so delighted by the feat that he begged the club as a memento.

Hampton, where Trollope laid the scenes of his *Three Clerks*, by far the best in his opinion as he once told me, of his earlier novels, used to boast the sobriquet of 'Appy.' That came from the annual race meeting, a veritable cockney carnival. To the turf it was much what the Epping Hunt was to the chase; it was a civic caricature of the Derby, with the Derby humours parodied and exaggerated. No one except the bookmakers and a sprinkling of legs and flats seemed to give a thought to the running of the horses. There were shows and booths of every description: Short and Codlin, Jerry with his performing dogs, were all there;

there were caravans with giants, dwarfs and other freaks, nigger minstrels, when they were rather a novelty; and notably troops of frolicksome young women with tambourines, who chanted free and easy songs, making unblushing advances to uproarious bachelors who had freighted their carriages with champagne hampers. I have seen nothing like it before or since, except in 'Sausage Alley' in the Viennese Prater at Easter or Whitsuntide. But there was more bitter beer and brandy than champagne, which marked the tone of the gathering. Of course there was some betting on the races and a drawing of sweeps, but the genuine excitement was in the gambling tents. Charlie Lyley and other notorieties did literally a roaring trade. Heaps of gold and silver, and occasionally a flutter of 'flimsies' changed hands with the spinning of the ball. It was in one of these canvas hells that Charles Dickens laid the scene of Sir Mulberry Hawk's quarrel with his pupil and dupe, and such quarrels were likely enough to come off, when men were flushed with wine and fretted by losses.

Hotels of famous repute have had their day, apparently decaying like the most fashionable Parisian restaurants of last century of something like dry rot and eclipsing themselves from no visible cause. When I knew Hampton Court, the Toy, commemorated by Scott in one of his letters, had gone; he had driven down with a select

party of poets to dine with his son the Major, whose regiment was in quarters there. So had the hog-backed wooden bridge, with timbers of extraordinary length, felled, as Gilbert White tells us, in the Hanger of Selborne. But it had been succeeded by a capital house, looking out on the river, where we dallied over many a quiet little dinner, when waiting for the rising moon to light us home to Halliford. Sometimes we would send portmanteaus by train, and shifting from flannels to evening dress, accept the hospitality of the regiment of light cavalry. The lot of the youngsters in the corps seemed always in those days especially enviable. They did their duty no doubt, but they were full of spirits and flush of money, however they came by it, and in the season or out of it, they were always on the rampage between the gaieties of West London and the tranquil Court.

Nothing could be gayer than the palace gardens on a fine Saturday or Sunday afternoon, and if you sympathised in the pleasures of humble folk, you could hardly fail to have a good time. The rail was circuitous, slow and decorous, and most of the merry excursionists came down by van. Albert Smith, the cockney novelist *par excellence*, has painted the cockney assemblage with the realistic detail of a Paul de Kock or a Zola. There were any number of Sprouts playing the cavaliers to good-looking Bessies flaunting in all the hues of the rainbow; and red-faced 'jolly men' were there

by the dozen. It was worth while getting yourself lost in the leafy labyrinths of the Maze, for at each turn you came upon loving couples, the gentleman always taking the lady's arm when his was not round her waist, and in that ideal solitude acting as if there were no onlookers except the sparrows or the robins.

Hampton Court was crowded of a holiday, and the river of a Sunday was lively from Maidenhead downwards; the only bother was the delay at the locks, and that was lightened by the friendly interchange of chaff. Immemorial privileges were so seldom abused, that there was little enforcement of riverine rights. The house-boat had hardly made its appearance, and when one did show, its occupants like the early navigators were on their best behaviour, and never made themselves obnoxious. On the contrary, they were rather welcome to the natives, for their hands were generally in their pockets. Here and there a quiet party would land for lunch: now and again they took up their quarters under canvas, drawing on the neighbourhood for supplies. The thread of blue smoke rising from the camp fire gave a graceful touch to the sylvan landscape, and the worst damage was widening a gap in the hedge when gathering a few fallen branches for fuel. The farmers sold their chickens and dairy produce, and the cottage children were delighted to run on errands before the days of compulsory school

attendance. Now with all regard for the recreations of the public, I am inclined to sympathise with the landowners who stand on rights of way, and come down upon aggressive excursionists for trespass on the rare occasions when they get the chance. For these amphibious trespassers are slippery as eels and elusive as the reckless motor-car drivers who are the terror and horror of our roads.

Down to Twickenham and Richmond you could dream away the time when you shipped the sculls or lay on the oars : you could indulge in romantic meditation on the many masters of song who have wedded the beauties of the river to immortal verse. The swans, undisturbed by the rush of the steam-launch, left it to you to avoid a collision, and seldom troubled to get out of the way. The punt fisher, with bait-can, beer-jar, and luncheon-basket, hung himself up between the 'rypecs' on some quiet reach of backwater where he could practise patience in perfect peace, and no watcher thought of disturbing him : even the otters and the water-hens, who had still their haunts in the sedges or under the willow roots, had no great reason to complain. But before taking leave of the non-tidal Thames, I must fondly recall one enchanting resort of mine. It was the Wharfe Farm on the Hedsor estate, rented by an old friend of mine and one of our boating crew, the brother-in-law of Lord Boston. The name commemorated the time when there was busy barge traffic on the



Thames; when the barges tied up there to land coal or lime, and to load up with fruit and vegetables for the London markets. The way to enjoy the quiet was to have a week's hard grinding in town over heavy dinners and in crowded drawing-rooms. You took the key of the fields on a Saturday, with a return ticket from Paddington, and at Maidenhead chartered a crawling fly. Shot out on the terrace at the door of the Wharfe, the transformation scene was exquisite and enchanting. We dined with windows opening on the little lawn, and the music, which I generally detest at dinner, was the chattering of starlings and the twittering of sparrows. And the swallows were circling and dipping on the river, till the bats, streaming out from under the tiled roof, gave them warning it was time to retire. When you went to your own bed, you were lulled to rest by the jug-jug of rival nightingales, and were wakened prematurely by the early thrush, whose challenge was answered from shrubbery and coppice, and whose solo was soon lost in a chorus. You heard the crow of the pheasant from the Hedsor woods and the gabble of water-loving birds from the reed-beds. With sunshine and freshening air streaming in through the latticed casement, the laziest of mortals could not have lain long in bed. Then your boat was on the shore, or rather the punt was in readiness, and the boatman had been impatiently waiting to punt you out for your bath



and to inspect his eel-baskets. You took your header under the hanging woods of Clieveden, erst the bower of wanton Shrewsbury and love, secure from intrusion as Diana and her nymphs—though, by the way, they were once surprised—as in the loneliest of Highland tarns.

## CHAPTER VI

### OLDER EDINBURGH

EDINBURGH in these latter days has flourished by law, physic, and divinity, above all by law. It lives in a legal atmosphere, and every second man you meet is a lawyer. In its legal aspect it is intimately associated with the two biographies of the language—Boswell's *Johnson* and Lockhart's *Scott*. Boswell distinguished himself by failing at the Scottish Bar, after heading the mob that broke the judges' windows, while Lockhart abandoned it to edit the *Quarterly*. Lockhart before he left gave inimitable descriptions of the legal celebrities of his time in *Peter's Letters to His Kinsfolk*. Scott had painted the habits of earlier generations in the Waverley Novels: when Pleydell devoted the week end to buffoonery and high jinks at Clerihugh's; when the host of the Hawes Inn was proud of his 'ganging plea' in the Parliament House, and when Peter Peebles deemed the notoriety of the suit that beggared him the height of earthly grandeur. In fact the Scots, who in the Baron of Bradwardine's words were made up of martial septs, betook themselves to fighting in the law courts when feuds had been put down with the

strong hand. Dandie Dinmont, who would have rather settled his neighbourly dispute with cudgel or broadsword, wellnigh quarrelled with Counsellor Pleydell for not lending him a lift towards insolvency. So when the lairds were impecunious and British colonies in their infancy, law was the most thriving of professions. Gentlemen of high descent could take to it without derogating: the heir, after a course of the Dutch universities, put on the wig and gown in the rash presumption that it would train him to manage the family estate: the cadets preferred a possible competency in the gay capital to the chances of adventure, with the certainty of hardships, in the Hudson Bay Company's service or our East Indian possessions. The aristocracy of the robe was the aristocracy of the Northern Island. With few exceptions, the judges of Session took sonorous titles from hereditary estates; they set the social fashions, and the fashions were peculiar. They dined early and drank deep. In the courts, which were darksome dens, they refreshed themselves from decanters of port at their elbows, and found their recreation in supping in some squalid tavern, where with talk that was sometimes brilliant and always loose, they prolonged conviviality into the small hours. They had often to be helped home by the 'cadie' in waiting; but nevertheless they got through a vast deal of head-work and drudgery when the pleading was chiefly carried on by pen and ink.

When I settled down in Edinburgh some fifty years ago, the old order had passed away altogether; the decencies of high position were strictly observed, and a judge would as soon have thought of supping in a tavern, or hotel, as of dancing a *pas seul* in his ermine in the Parliament Close. But celebrities still survived—the Whigs were then in the ascendant—who had fought the battles of popular freedom against the autocracy of Dundas and had listened to the savage sentences of Braxfield. There were men who had curiously looked on at the marvellous drinking feats of such famous four-bottle legislators as Hermiston or Kilkerran. Jeffrey had long resigned the editorship of the *Edinburgh*, but he was still seated in the Inner House. I remember the reverence with which I regarded the wrinkled old *littérateur*, whose name had become a household word all the world over. Political animosities had calmed down with the passing of the Reform Bill, and Whig and Tory now met on neutral ground, though the struggle for place and promotion was fierce as ever in the Parliament House. Jeffrey extended his hospitalities to both parties. Craigcrook, his picturesque residence, under the northern slopes of Corstorphine Hill, where he used to play leap-frog on the lawn when a few years younger, was then really in the country. There the landlord still gave weekly welcome to legal or literary cronies and contemporaries, and there was generally a gathering on

Saturdays and Sundays. Some had battled and suffered together in adverse times ; others had run to extremities of anti-patriotism through the Peninsular War ; not a few of the cronies were to drop off almost simultaneously. There was Lord Cockburn, whose *Memoirs*, though embittered by prejudice and political animus, give the most vivid pictures of the men and manners and abuses of his early days. No man was more beloved by his friends and family, or with better reason, but for years he had been generating gall in the cold shade of political ostracism. As Jeffrey had set up his tabernacle under Corstorphine, so Cockburn had his home at Bonaly, beneath the Pentlands. There was Moncrieff, whom Cockburn loved and laughed at—‘Crieffie,’ as he familiarly calls him—who inherited the talents he transmitted to his descendants. There was Lord Murray, chiefly famed as host and *bon vivant*, who appreciated the claret and *cuisine* of Craigcrook ; there were Lords Cunningham and Rutherford. On the death of the latter I bought his set of *Session Cases*, sumptuously bound in calf, to be resold very shortly, and subsequently to be replaced by another set which in their turn went to the sale room.

When I went to Edinburgh to try my fortunes in the law, decentralisation and democracy were already beginning to affect the lawyers. Yet there was still a survival of the immemorial state of things described by ‘Peter’ in his *Letters*. All

cases of importance came for settlement to the Supreme Courts; the advocates were still something of a landed aristocracy; and most of them, when they had landed possessions and rose to the Bench, took the honorary title from their estates. Very embarrassing it sometimes was when they went touring on the continent with their untitled wives, and punctilious landlords, not understanding the connection, rudely turned them away from the door.

Birth and family connection were even more profitable to the Writers to the Signet. Fortunate firms had transmitted lucrative business from father to son. When I was entered for the running, serving my time in a Writer to the Signet's office, about £500 was paid for me, in shape of apprentice fees, government stamps, etc., I got a trifle of it back in copying papers at threepence a page, which brought in a professional income of about £50. That was nearly all I gained in an apprenticeship of monotonous routine. Moreover, though I had fair connections, prospects were being overcast. Hitherto fortunate writers had taken things easily; they managed all the great estates, and without giving any guarantee for the rents, earned a five per cent. commission by simply collecting them. In these days the Bar not only offers every man a fair field, but, as in England, the best chance of a clever aspirant is to be connected with firms of solicitors; and the jurisdiction



of the county courts having been enlarged, many once profitable suits are settled far away from the Parliament House. Birth and descent count for very little. But it is the Writers to the Signet who have most reason for grumbling. The lairds were always an impecunious class, but under pressure of falling rents and growing mortgages, they had learned to look more closely to their out-givings. They grudged the Edinburgh agents their easy gains, and found local men to do their work for what old Trapbois would have called a small consideration. A kinsman of my own, of moderate estate, to whom I had looked to help me towards affluence, said he saved £150 a year by the change. I dare say he did, but it was money out of my pocket, so I decided to turn my talents to the higher branch of the profession.

If I never become Lord President or Lord Justice-Clerk, perhaps I have only myself to blame. I passed the preliminary trials with credit, and then devoted a dozen of years to sport, continental travel, and other distractions. When I came back to put on the wig and gown, my contemporaries had got as many years ahead of me, and I was not the man to come on with a rush and make up the leeway. Nevertheless, I did a deal of pedestrianism in the long and lofty hall of the ancient Parliament House. Edinburgh has the pull of London in that respect, for the advocate in embryo is always on show. He has not to sit

waiting for mythical briefs in a sequestered garret in some Inn of Court. There are agents to be stalked, button-holed, and flattered, and the cynic sees a considerable amount of unsophisticated human nature. In the year I paced the boards, I picked up a few guineas for formal motions, and some stray five pound notes for assisting at technical proceedings, but found no opportunity of distinguishing myself. Had I had the chance, I doubt whether I should have availed myself of it, for I cannot flatter myself I cut a figure in legal debates in the Juridical Society. The orator is shaky on his legs, when he knows next to nothing of his subject. So, after a twelvemonth, I shook the dust off my feet and came south. Yet though that year became intolerably tiresome as it drew to a close, I have rather pleasant recollections of it. The hall itself, with its high timbered roof and dim religious light, was rich in historical associations of the troublous times of distracted Scotland. There were old briefless advocates who had made them their study, and were always ready to impart their knowledge, enthusiastic as Dickens's Jack Bamber over lonely chambers in the Inns of Court. There were still scintillations of the sparks Lockhart tells of, when there were gatherings of the junior briefless round the great fireplaces, where gossip and jest and repartee went round; where Scott with his toupet, christened by the facetious Peter Robertson, 'Peveril of the Peak,' had tossed

back the clinging sobriquet of 'Peter of the Paunch.'

By the way, in naming notable judges, I forgot the humorous Peter. In my time he was still well to the fore and as keen after fun and jollity as ever. With some of the officers in garrison, we once gave a picnic and dance at Roslin, just after war had been declared with Russia. Lord Robertson arrived late, but came in time to take the chair at supper, and characteristically brought a couple of bottles of kummel. The last we should have, he pathetically remarked, so we had better make the most of them. By the way, at the sale of his lordship's books, I bought his set of the Waverley Novels, most of them first editions. They were scrawled over with his pencil notes, some of them serious, others sneering. One of them is: 'Easy writing, Master Walter, is d——d hard reading.' In another, where Scott in *The Bride of Lammermoor* preaches patience as the best alleviation of human ills, the remark is, 'Very true, Walter; I trust I shall always remember that.'

I might have held out longer, but for the sense of living under the microscope and being constrained to be hypocritical in spite of yourself. Every one knew and talked about what everybody else did. If you put the foot in a stirrup it was a professional scandal; in common prudence you had to sneak out of the stable-yard and head for the beautiful country by back streets. Happily

golf was not only tolerated but encouraged. At one o'clock, if—Heaven save the mark—he had no pressing business, the youthful advocate was supposed to be free, and could betake himself to the Links with unruffled conscience. To the links of Musselburgh or North Berwick, the decaying guild of the caddies had transported itself. When Colonel Mannering visited Edinburgh, a caddie guided him to Pleydell's lodgings, and Pleydell put Dominie Sampson in charge of another. The caddies, like the Gallegans, the water-carriers of Madrid, were a Highland confraternity with some of the barbaric virtues, but with neither principles nor morals. They sold themselves to their employer for the time, and charged themselves with the most questionable missions. They knew every close and den in the Old Town, and as it was their business to gather scandalous gossip, they were the most serviceable of spies—and worse. No Figaro was more tactful in conveying a *billet-doux*, and the fraternity were always able and ready to help each other. When society shifted to the New Town, their occupation was wellnigh gone. Forty years ago there was still a remnant of them to be seen, lounging on benches at the street corners, with the leathern straps, which were the badge of office, on their shoulders. They carried bundles of papers for the 'writers' or baggage for the casual tourist. They spoke broken Scotch in a guttural Gaelic accent, and in their

faces you could see that whether business was brisk or slack, they were good customers to the public round the corner. But the veritable caddie had betaken himself to carrying golf clubs. If he were sharp and something of a performer, there he was sure of regular employment, for golf was the solitary recreation, except a walk, in which any man might indulge without losing caste or credit. I have seen myself the Lord Justice-Clerk playing a round with an ex-Moderator of the General Assembly. Indeed divines of the olden time like Robertson prided themselves on their performances with the clubs as on their pulpit eloquence. Still on Bruntsfield Links, immune from building desecration, and overlooked by Heriot's Hospital, burghers as grave as 'Jingling Geordie' might be seen doing the daily round in scarlet bleached by sunshine and storm. No one I ever heard of played on Leith Links, where James of York and Cumberland, 'the butcher of Culloden,' used to take their pleasure, as golfing tradition was still proud to tell. But Musselburgh was the great resort, and, owing to the press of business engagements, the links, save on a Saturday, were seldom overcrowded. I cannot say so much for the parlour at Mrs. Foreman's, near Drummore, so often mentioned in Jupiter Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, where each party on its rounds made a point of lunching on the simple fare of grilled haddocks and poached eggs.



*Apropos* of caddies and luncheons at Mrs. Foreman's, I mentioned Clerihugh's, and every one remembers Colonel Mannering's amazement when he surprised Pleydell at high jinks in that pandemonium of roasting and grilling. Great lawyers had ceased to frequent the Clerihugh's, where it had been their habit to receive clients and hold nightly consultations. But there was still a sublimated Clerihugh's in the Fleshmarket, a survival of those prehistoric days, and the only place for a genuine Scottish dinner, with cookery worthy of Meg Dodds. The approaches were as little alluring as the name of the locality. Putting it bluntly, it needed a strong stomach to face them, and that indeed was indispensable for the fare to follow. Once over the threshold it was a highly respectable house, and many a memory associates itself with the faded moreen of the curtains and the bristling horsehair of the sofas. It was all the better if you sent your own wines, but the brands of the stronger liquors were unexceptionable. The *menu* might safely be left to the landlord. You began with cock-a-leekie, hotch-potch, or the barley broth of which Dr. Johnson declared he cared not how soon he ate of it again; there were crappit heads, crimped salmon or sea-trout fresh from the Firth; sheep's head was followed by steaks sent up hot and hot; winding up with marrow-bones and toasted Dunlop cheese. But the grand feature of the banquet was the haggis—'great chieftain



of the pudding race'—the gush of balmy fragrance under the insertion of the knife would have given an appetite under the ribs of death. The secret of judicious excess was an occasional *chasse* of whisky. Once when entertaining some English friends, giving one of them his directions and bearings, I had asked him to order dinner. The dinner was satisfactory, till the haggis came up, a pitiful abortion about the size of an apple. The host himself appeared, in answer to the breaking of the bell-pull, and the apology came before indignation found voice. 'Lord bless me, sir, gin' I had known it was you. They tellt me it was English folk, and I kenned weel they would never settle the haggis wi' a dram.'

Ambrose's must have much resembled that sombre dining place in the Fleshmarket, and Ambrose's recalls the *Noctes Ambrosianæ* and the last of the golden age of letters in Edinburgh. Fifty years ago or less, there were shining celebrities,—some of them still in the matured strength of intellectual activity, and the memory of others who had departed was still green. Law and letters were closely associated. Many a young briefless advocate had eked out his income anonymously, and though a successful novel would have been professional suicide, to such an one, a shrievalty put the anonymous scribbler on velvet, and the judge was free to take any liberties. Jeffrey and Cockburn were cases in point. Professor Aytoun, though

Sheriff of the Orkneys, like Scott, had thrown over law for literature, and 'Willie Aytoun,' joint author with Theodore Martin of the *Bon Gaultier Ballads*, was famous for impromptus and the *bon mot*. With Mark Napier, another literary sheriff, he did not add to his popularity in Presbyterian circles by his passion for Prelacy and high Toryism,—for Montrose, Claverhouse, and the persecuting Cavaliers who had watered the seeds of the kirk with the blood of the martyrs. Talking of Bon Gaultier, there never was a grosser calumny than that which alleged that the Scot is impervious to humour. To say nothing of Dean Ramsay and his collections of north country anecdotes, in the generation that followed Jeffrey, there was no greater social favourite than Lord Neaves, who not only wrote comic songs and clever parodies, but sang them in a cracked voice that rather reminded you of the croak of the raven. It was a sign of the progress of the times when he had an extraordinary success with the blasphemous refrain, 'Let us all be unhappy on Sunday'; and when with an audacity worthy of Voltaire, he parodied the theories of Darwin. Hill Burton, who might have sat to Scott for the book-loving Antiquary, was writing sober history and his *Book-Hunter* in lighter vein, in a den in a gloomy old mansion beyond Morningside, approached by a weed-grown avenue shadowed by secular elms—a cheerless counterpart of the sanctum of Monkbarns. His

curious library was stored away on shelves in a labyrinth of dark passages and cabinets with short flights of steps in the most unlikely places. Nevertheless, when he went groping in the dark, his *flair* for each volume was infallible as that of Constable. He took his holidays like the proverbial waiter whose notion of recreation was helping a friend. When he came to London, it was to haunt the British Museum, and he never cared to sacrifice to the Graces. I see the old gentleman now in the hall of the Athenæum, with hat and hair both brushed the wrong way, and the high-pointed collar, unattached behind, giving him the look of a venerable lop-eared rabbit. Yet to the last he was the best of company, over-bubbling with genuine Scottish *esprit*. An early booklet of his on the Cairngorums, unfortunately long out of print, is the most delightful of guides to the recesses of those romantic mountains.

Every one must be familiar with Christopher North from his portraits. I have seen him, without doubt, though he was never pointed out to me. But it always struck me that another professor must have resembled him *en petit*, and both were enthusiasts and equally regardless of appearances. Blackie was a familiar figure in Princes Street. There was no mistaking his erect carriage, the springy step, the piercing eye, the thin and nervous hand grasping the heavy staff, with the plaid that in all weathers was cast loosely round

the shoulders. The Professor and I were old acquaintances: he had the good sense to take a fancy to me as a boy—he then filled the chair of Latin in Aberdeen. He gave me the run of his book-shelves, and he had works that exactly suited me. There were A'Beckett's *Comic History of England*, Keightley's *Fairy Mythology*, and Bishop Percy's *Reliques*. But perhaps the volume of our joint predilection was a collection of penny horn-books, of which the gem was *Dan O'Rourke's Flight to the Moon*. Then the Professor, who always had a sweet tooth, had been translating Æschylus and was much in the way of poetical improvisation. One stanza I best remember was inspired by a sight of his tea-table :—

‘ My heart leaps up into my mouth,  
And happy now I am,  
When on the table I behold  
A plate of ruddy jam.’

He was in his finest form when striding up and down the room, chanting in a stentorian voice his patriotic German war songs. Educated at a German University, he was more German than the Germans, as afterwards he became more of a Highlander than the Celts.

Christopher North and *Maga* recall John Blackwood, around whom Aytoun, Burton, Neaves, and many minor luminaries were revolving. There were two centres of attraction, or rather three :

the old saloon, 43 George Street, rich in literary portraits as another room in Albemarle Street ; the hospitable table in Randolph Crescent, where the host himself was the magnet ; and the mansion of Strathtyrum, near St. Andrews Links, where the doors were always open to golfers and all others. I heard much of him then, though I only won his intimacy years afterwards. What endeared him to friends was his staunch friendship, his cheery social gifts, and his sterling candour. His contributors owed him much, for they profited by the shrewd and searching criticism, as sound as it was kindly offered. If he had a fault as a publisher, it was that he was more generous of praise than blame, and when he took a fancy to a clever contributor, it would have been hard indeed to disillusion him.

With the doctors, happily, I had little to do ; but there were men of eminence who perpetuated the traditions of the Scottish medical school, and drew many wealthy families to Edinburgh. Symes was famous for surgical operations, and Simpson, with his skill and use of anæsthetics, had, perhaps, the largest female *clientèle* in Great Britain. I used to hear that the many rooms of his house in Queen Street looked in the afternoon like a military ambulance after a severe action.

Outsiders and the ladies gave little thought to the law, but pulpit eloquence was much in favour ; and the stage as a magnet of attraction was not in



it with the pulpit. Scotland was still palpitating from the convulsions of the Disruption. Chalmers had died in 1847, but his impassioned *aides-de-camp*, with something less of his sound judgment and politic moderation, still upheld the blue banner of the Covenant, and had taken for their badge the burning bush and the motto of *Nec tamen consumebatur*. Chief among those who kept the fire alive in Edinburgh were Candlish and Cunningham, with Dr. Begg of Liberton, a fanatical advocate for total abstinence and the Mosaic observance of a Judaical Sabbath; but the most eloquent and persuasive of the Free Kirk divines was Guthrie. He drew like Rowland Hill or Charles Honeyman, though a very different stamp of man from either. He attracted alike the devout, the fashionables, and those who, like the too superstitious citizens of Athens, were keen to hear or to tell any new thing to remote St. John's at the back of the Castle Rock, looking down on the Grassmarket where so many martyrs for the Covenant had glorified God on the gibbet. I kept a couple of sittings there for several years, and the occupant of a seat—a stall I was almost going to say—could do no greater kindness than that of offering it to a friend. The preacher was intensely dramatic in action, and Guthrie might have been a Garrick. A grand tragedian, steeped to the soul in the spirit of his mission, playing on the emotions at will with marvellous versatility, he swept his audience along



with him. There was no mistaking his profound sincerity; but he threw himself into each part he conceived, and evidently realised the scenes he imagined and acted. The magic was that all seemed improvised, and not infrequently the strong sense of humour would lend a subtle infusion of the comic. Most actors warm to their work as they go along; Guthrie pitched his keynote at the highest, and could sustain it even at that pitch when he changed the sensational for the solemn appeal. The opening of one sermon I can never forget. He reared his tall figure in the pulpit, looked into vacancy with the fixed gaze of the seer, and began, 'I see a shipwreck.' We heard the roar of the storm; we saw the billows breaking over the wreck; then when all eyes were on the sinking ship, he pointed to the castaway, clinging to a plank, seemingly lost beyond hope of salvation.

The leaders of the Moderates may have been learned theologians, but they were 'cauldrie' doctrinaires, and did not appeal to hot gospellers. For the most part they preached to half-empty churches. Almost a generation later, when acerbities had greatly softened, there were eloquent scholars, like my genial and accomplished friend Principal Tulloch, who could fill great St. George's of a summer evening. The aristocratic Episcopalian communion, with its quaternion of churches, was represented by the venerable Dean Ramsay of

St. John's. Seats were almost as difficult to get there as at the St. John's of Dr. Guthrie. The Dean was not a great preacher, but he was a living exponent of broad Christian charity. No man was more winning, or won more admirers. Had he advocated confession, his hours would have been fully occupied, for he was adored by the ladies of his flock. The chronicler of old Scottish wit and humour came from the 'Howe of the Mearns,' and had endless good stories of family connections and old country friends in Forfar and Kincardine. Some of them, transplanted to the Borders, have reappeared in Mrs. Hughes's *Recollections of Scott*. No doubt he condemned the excessive conviviality of Lairds of Balnamoon and the drinking bouts of Lord Panmure at Brechin Castle, yet there was a merry twinkle in his eye when he alluded to these scandals and to the lad who was told off to loosen the cravats of the boon companions who had slipped under the table. Of a summer afternoon after service he would stroll out over the Dean Bridge. One blustering day when his hat was blown off, and went circling down the depths to St. Bernard's Well, I remember how the stream of promenaders turned amused and affectionate looks on the grey hair streaming in the air, when his laughing niece was replacing the hat with a handkerchief. But such Sunday strolls were virtually forbidden to the stricter sect of Sabbatarians. The town was absolutely silent, except immediately before and

after the two 'diets of service.' Then for ten minutes or so, there was a tread on the pavements, as of the march of battalions a trifle out of step. Landladies in lodgings struck against cooking hot victuals, drawing the line at boiling potatoes; the hotel-keepers who catered for stranger guests were regarded as Erastians who risked perdition for lucre; and the Post Office at the extreme end of the city was only open for an hour in the early morning, when you had to fight for your letters at a grating. Knox, Melville, or Henderson would turn in their graves, were they to see Princes Street now of a fine Sunday summer morning with brakes, busses, and tramcars, and its uproarious tourist traffic.

## CHAPTER VII

### OLD SCOTTISH ECCLESIASTICISM

MEMORY looks back on strange changes in Scottish society since my boyhood—some I have already remarked upon—especially in the northern counties, for they were more out of the world. Melancholy changes I call them, but that may be matter of sentiment. Stagnation, with undercurrents of quiet but strenuous activity, was only occasionally disturbed by ripples on the surface. Such as it was, it was a society we shall never see again. There was no bustle and little perceptible progress. By land the means of transport were few and comparatively costly. On the highroads from Aberdeen to the South, or to the Highland capital, there were at the most two or three coaches *per diem*. The day and night mails carried only light luggage on the roof; the scarlet-coated guard was perched on a breezy tripod at the back, and there was a bare half dozen of outside passengers. Whether by the mails or the more accommodating ‘Defiance,’ there were odds against being picked up anywhere *en route*. Dr. Johnson spent several days at Lichfield, waiting for the chance of a cast to London by coach or return post-chaise.

With us things were not altogether so bad as that ; but more than once on successive mornings in deep snow or bitter frost, I have gone with my luggage to the ' smithy ' at the side-road, and after toasting myself over the fires of the forge, have had to go back to the family breakfast-table from a bootless errand. The lumbering coaches on the by-routes loaded up to any extent, but after all their capacity was limited. Yet rather than be left behind, I have held on to a toppling pile of baggage, in the company of a collie or a setter choking in his collar, and slipping over the edge at intervals to be half strangled in the chain. That was no place for the prim spinster, contemplating a long deferred visit, or for the gouty old gentleman who might have liked a last glimpse at the gay world. Consequently, as they could not afford posting, they stayed at home, sticking tenaciously to their houses like mussels to the sea-reefs. For posting came uncommonly dear, what with stoppages at the inns and tips to the servants and post-boys ; and besides, you had to reckon with inevitable delays, for on those byways the number of horses was limited. Very different it was from the Bath or the Great Northern Road, where, when the smoking posters dashed up to the door, the relay and the rider were always ready.

In the sleepy county town, though it might boast a baron bailie and a town council, the society was almost as innocent and unsophisticated as in the

most world-forsaken of parishes. They knew little and cared less about politics and public affairs. In fact, through the long peace, there was seldom exciting news from abroad, till the country after waking up with the Crimean War was thrilled by the horrors of the Indian Mutiny. Even home politics excited small interest and no enthusiasm, for if by chance there was a contested election the issue was generally a foregone conclusion. All my own relations and connections went naturally for the sound old Tory with an absolutely safe seat. The sitting member's agent had no sort of trouble; he prophesied on velvet and the simplest calculations. Each landowner counted the heads of his tenants, and saw that they were safely shepherded to the poll. I have mentioned that cousin of mine who took no little credit to himself for letting one of his leading farmers, the son of a favourite 'grieve,' vote according to his conscience for the Radical candidate who had not the shadow of a chance. Hence the violent revulsion of rural Scotland to Radicalism when the ballot assured freedom of action, and the Free Kirkers, who were invariably Liberal, came to the front. Nevertheless, the arrival of the weekly journal was an event eagerly looked forward to, because all were profoundly concerned with 'domestics.' Domestics comprehended everything local in the way of news or gossip, from births and deaths, markets and cattle shows, to presentations, presbytery meetings,



and ploughing matches. Any amount of space was devoted to the speeches at agricultural dinners, though always running on identical lines, bristling with the familiar platitudes and jokes ; and parochial penny-a-liners ran riot in recording local convivial gatherings, in complimenting the musicians who 'discoursed sweet music,' and the landlady who served the supper in 'her usual admirable style.' The paper passed on from hand to hand, till, begrimed beyond deciphering, it was worn to tatters. It was read the more religiously that it cost money, for the stamp-duty crippled journalism ; the paper tax had not been repealed, and fivepence was a grave consideration in a frugal household. On the other hand, distance lent a delusive glamour to the power, personalities, and omniscience of the Metropolitan press, and even tarry-at-home natives of some education were quaintly credulous. I can recall a queer example. A worthy baronet with one of his neighbours was laughing uproariously over the latest *Punch*. Mark Lemon had sent 'Mr. Briggs Salmon-fishing and Deer-stalking in the Highlands,' and they were tickled by his latest mishap. 'I wonder who Briggs is,' said the baronet, who fancied him as veritable a personage as Palmerston or Derby, though delicately shrouded under a pseudonym. 'Ay, you may be sure they know all about him in London,' ejaculated the other, 'and I wonder how the poor man takes to his notoriety.'

I used to be taken on visits to various old-lady relatives dotted about those county towns. Generous to the poor, they lived within modest incomes, and their small establishments were regulated with the strictest economy. Nevertheless I have pleasant recollections of their tables, for they prided themselves on family recipes; they personally superintended the kitchen and delighted in spoiling the young folk with cakes of their own baking. Generally they had a single servant, devoted to the mistress, of whom the mistress stood in considerable awe, and who was consulted on all occasions. They prided themselves on their pedigrees, were great in genealogies, and, like Walter Scott's grand-aunt, Mrs. Scott of Harden, could trace out intricate connections to the tenth generation. Though the reverse of rich, as they had money to bequeath, they were the objects of respectful attentions on the part of impecunious relatives. I cannot tax myself with fulsome obsequiousness, though I had the luck to come in for more than one small legacy, and indeed I have always fancied I lost a few hundred pounds, because I threw over one solemn tea-party for a gay dinner in barracks. And that was in somewhat later years when I ought to have known better.

With those worthy old ladies entertainments took the form of an early tea, followed by long whist and a heavy supper. They made no pretence of dinner-giving, and foreign wines were seldom

seen on their tables. On rare occasions wines came from the grocer's round the corner, who laid down a dozen or two for christenings and burials. I shall never forget the wry face of an uncle, when his sister, in honour of his visit, brought out a bottle of port. A connoisseur of the vintages of the Douro, he knew well the qualities of that infernal black draught, but he had reasons for keeping well with the lady: he manfully braced himself for the ordeal, and was much the worse for a week after. Port or so-called Bucellus was never wasted on me, and I rather liked the currant or the ginger, which was always accompanied by sweet cakes.

There were two sorts of spinster aunts: the frivolous and the serious. Extreme High Church folk, of whom there were many in these parts, though they went in for ritual, and long morning prayers from the Scottish liturgy—a terrible tax on the patience before breakfast—took liberal views of life and its innocent amusements. Their evenings were lightened by the card-tables, with infinitesimal stakes, and they liked to get up an impromptu dance. And Presbyterian ladies who belonged to the moderate party of the Church were likewise relatively lax in life and conversation. But it was a serious business staying with an evangelical hostess, who mortified the flesh in an atmosphere of gloom, and held fast to the Calvinism of Knox and Andrew Melville. Cards were literally the devil's books, for some one was bound to look after the luck, and

it only could be the Power of Evil. Even the strathspey and the reel were snares of Satan, and as for the waltz, it was a horror unspeakable. Of the theatre they knew nothing, except from vague report: no strolling company could ever have cleared its expenses in a country town, and even in the comparatively populous city of Aberdeen, the house was never encouraged by the gentry. It paid its way by the aid of pit and gallery, with an occasional benefit or gala night under patronage of the garrison.

Almack's was never more exclusive than those select parties: 'coming of kened folk' was an indispensable recommendation, and the line was severely drawn above the doctor or the solicitor. But the clergyman of whatever denomination was an exception; in Presbyterian circles especially, he was a cherished and honoured guest. The Episcopalian divines had a somewhat hard time of it, though in the north-eastern counties most of the greater landowners belonged to their flocks. Supported chiefly by voluntary contributions, they starved upon small stipends, and welcomed an invitation to a good dinner as a godsend. One gentleman I remember, a fine scholar and a pluralist too, for he not only had a parochial charge and a deanery, but was chaplain to a wealthy noble, who as he said himself, kept his household chiefly on farinaceous food. Nevertheless the diet agreed with him: he was plump and

well-liking, like the children of the Captivity who fattened on pulse, and he always came up to the pulpit smiling. When he took for his theme the obligation of being temperate in all things, you could hardly realise that he was constrained to practise the doctrine he preached. It was very different with his successor in that cure. An incarnation of compulsory asceticism, as if he had trained upon pickled herrings and parched peas, he looked like a St. Simeon Stylites come down from his column. Yet the wiry little man was extraordinarily energetic; he preached once and sometimes twice in his own little church, and with a fervour of eloquence which should have drawn a larger congregation. In the evening he undertook a service in a schoolhouse, five miles from his vicarage, and if he could not get a lift in a farmer's gig, he tramped it on his own little legs. A scholar like his predecessor, and a reader with slight inducement to study, had his lines been cast in the South, he might have held an audience spell-bound on his words under the dome of St. Paul's, published sermons which would have forced themselves on popular notice, and been promoted by force of public appreciation to a bishopric. As it was, being, as Counsellor Pleydell put it to Guy Mannering, a member of the suffering Church of Scotland, though the days of persecution had passed away, he was inevitably condemned to poverty and obscurity, a type of too many of his



class who were starving on miserable endowments. The state of those poor Episcopalian divines *in partibus* was a scandal, and though all may have had a trifle over forty pounds a year, no one of them could call himself 'passing rich,' even in districts where the cost of living was at a minimum.

The Presbyterian 'minister' was an exceptionally fortunate man: nine times out of ten when he was 'placed,' he had attained the summit of his ambitions. He might dream of oratorical triumphs and authority in Church Courts, but as to these he was comparatively indifferent. For the most part, after many fears and hopes, he had risen from poverty to relative affluence. Respected for the sake of his gown, it was his own fault if he were not revered, especially by the women. He was not very often a gentleman, in the social acceptation of the word, and even the sons of the manse, who took to the hereditary profession as ducklings to the water, were seldom regarded altogether as the equals of their aristocratic landed neighbours. Many of the clergy had risen from the ranks, and attained the exalted eminence of the pulpit by strenuous efforts of their own and at the cost of great sacrifices on the part of relatives. They were of a higher order than the modern Irish priest, but the ordeal they had gone through was not very different. The Aberdeen colleges were the clerical nurseries of the North, and notably King's College in Old Aberdeen. The session



lasted for five months in the year, and for those who meant business, it was a time of tremendous work—of pinching and sometimes of starving. The sleepy old borough, with its long single street, was a somewhat gaunt and grim but picturesque reflection of the English cathedral town and the Southern seats of letters. Old Aberdeen was the St. Andrews of the North. The shady Canonry recalled the departed glories of the well-endowed Catholic Church. The low, massive spires of the grey cathedral, the graceful, arched, and strongly buttressed crown that crested the square tower of the college matched well with the bare links, the yellow sand-hills, and the moaning surf of the northern sea. But the professors were snugly housed in old rambling, ramshackle houses with great straggling gardens. For seven months the ‘auld toon’ slept and stagnated; then it wakened up to noisy life with the rush of possible ministers in embryo. Each lad or boy of them was as keen on cash as any man who stakes his napoleons at Monte Carlo. Mr. Andrew Carnegie had been anticipated by forgotten philanthropists; each autumn some thirty bursaries, ranging in value from thirty pounds down to eight pounds or less, were put up to open competition; and besides there were sundry others to which the right of presentation was reserved by descendants of the original donors. The decision depended on the facility of turning English into Latin and *vice versâ*.

For that purpose every parochial schoolmaster of notoriety in the North had turned crammer, and the two Grammar Schools in Old and New Aberdeen, with their reputation for success, had attracted troops of the better-to-do aspirants.

The lucky youth, who had listened with throbbing heart to the announcements of the successful, got his bursary; then he had to look to ways and means and to search out his modest lodging. The tenements in the College Bounds swarmed like so many rabbit warrens; two lads might club and pig together in a single upper chamber. Literally not a few of them cultivated literature on a little oatmeal with occasional salt herrings. Some took pupils in the recess, when they could get them; others tramped back to their homes in the distant Highlands to hire themselves out as field labourers or take a summer cruise with the fishing craft. One man, I remember, who went to Trinity, Cambridge, had broken stones on the roads. The best of them, whether in college or away from it, burned the midnight oil indefatigably or strained aching eyes over guttering tallow. The last Duke of Gordon, who was greatly beloved, and who deserved better treatment than was given him in Lord Cockburn's book, used to delight in giving these footsore wayfarers a lift in his chariot, with bed and supper to follow, and something to send them on their way rejoicing. For like the German *Reisebürschen* they did not scorn such kindly

charity, and moreover more than one of those chance meetings is said to have led to a presentation and a parish. As N. P. Willis remarked, on his visit to Gordon Castle, his Grace was more free with the many parishes in his gift than with his famous breed of Gordon setters.

All through the four years' curriculum and the subsequent divinity course, the clerical aspirant had his gaze set steadily on the pulpit. Failing that, there was always the parish school as a *pis aller*, and of that in any case he was pretty sure. But taking a school was tantamount to an advocate accepting a sub-sheriffship and throwing up the sponge. On the road to the pulpit were various stumbling-blocks. Country congregations were not fastidious as to manners and deportment, though some of these rough-bred Highland *alumni* were ungainly and uncouth as Dominie Sampson, but like Sampson they never came to wag their pow in a pulpit, because the nerve gave way when they came to the scratch. If there was anything the Scots were hot upon, it was fluent extempore preaching: reading from a paper was a sure sign that the minister had not the root of the matter in him. And then, and I say it with all reverence, the long extempore prayers were staggerers to the novice.

In the olden time the patron presented and the parishioners had nothing to say in the matter. When I was a boy, the rule began to be relaxed,

and the more liberal-minded patrons gave 'a leet' of a dozen or so, who paraded their paces on as many successive Sabbaths before an intensely critical congregation. A terrible ordeal it must have been, when modest merit, and sensitive self-consciousness were the most likely to go to the wall.

Going back more years than I care to think of, I call up the interior of a country church and the pew in front of the gallery facing the pulpit in which I was seated, when a competition came to its climax. In front was a row of cushioned chairs, with the eagle crest of the family carved on the backs; behind these a double row of seats for the servants. The front places in the galleries at right angles on either side were occupied by other lairds or landowners. All were draped with cloth, often faded and moth-eaten, though if there had been a recent death in the household, it had been renewed in dismal black. Immediately beneath the pulpit was the precentor's box; in the dusk of the wintry afternoon service, it was his duty to read out the metrical psalms by couplets before striking up the stave; *ex officio* he was an authoritative judge. At the bottom of the stairs was the square pew filled with the elders of the kirk-session, the final court of appeal. But it was a thoroughly democratic assemblage, and the elders only reflected popular opinion. Each soul in the crowded church, except the school-boys and the

small children, were deeply interested auditors. Some sixty years ago the costumes were primitive and picturesque. Most of the males were in decent black, in coats kept carefully in 'kists,' and handed down as heirlooms. But though the parish was below the Highland line, there was a sprinkling of shepherds in rough homespun, with checked plaids belted across their broad shoulders, and sometimes accompanied by the collies which crouched at their feet. Yet the sombre gloom of the interior was relieved by patches of colour. The old wives were regular attendants at public worship, travelling in all weathers from remote farm steadings and cottages, seated on trusses of straw in jolting carts; but on this extraordinary occasion they had mustered in unusual strength. They were all got up in scarlet cloaks, or roquelaures—much as they loathed the Scarlet Woman of Babylon, they unanimously copied her attire—and in high white 'mutches,' with flowing lappets and black bows. Every woman of them brought a great bunch of mint or thyme, or some strong-smelling herbs, warranted as anti-soporific as the goodman's pungent snuff. Nor was it an unnecessary precaution, for with hermetically sealed windows the atmosphere was overpowering.

It was an extraordinary occasion, for out of a list of half a dozen candidates, five had already preached 'with no approval.' The chance had now come to the sixth, and it was known that there



was some romance attaching to the decision. He was a nephew of the late minister, and it was notorious that he had lost his heart to the bonniest of all the belles of the parish. If he got the kirk, they would be married right away; if he failed to catch the tide of fortune at the flow, the couple must wait—indefinitely. And there was his blushing lady-love—a mistake, perhaps—sheltering under the wing of her practical mother, who would never give her away to a ‘stickit’ preacher.

So the youth, who, like David, was ruddy and well-favoured, had the sympathies of the congregation. Nevertheless, with so much involved, it was a terrible ordeal, and boy as I was, I felt for him. The colour went and came in his pallid cheeks, but he got through the preliminaries tolerably well. The sermon was the big leap, and it was a question whether he could stay and clear it. All eyes were riveted on him as he rose; and his fingers trembled nervously as he opened the Bible. ‘Eh, man,’ I heard the old butler mutter behind me, ‘half a bottle of port or a mutchkin of Glenlivet would mak’ a’ the differ now.’ It seemed likely, indeed, that for lack of stimulants there would be a regular breakdown; the candidate was clearly stricken with stage fright. He stammered; he stuttered out a sentence or two, and then came to a full stop. There were audible ejaculations of ‘puir lād,’ and the rosy face of the half-betrothed was white as her pocket napkin. The preacher leaned



forward on the cushion for what might have been half a minute, but seemed like half an hour. Then he rose, evidently divested of fears and detached from terrestrial surroundings; the faltering accents swelled into a volume of sublime self-confidence, and for a full hour he poured forth a simple, fervid, eloquent discourse which struck straight home to the hearts of the hearers. There was no formal preparation there; it was the outpouring of familiar thoughts and profound feeling, in an outburst of inspiration. It was like the dramatic triumph of a *prima donna* in embryo, if there were neither shouts of applause nor showers of bouquets. The cause was won with the manse and the wife.

In the far-scattered peopling of a wide Scottish parish, the kirkyard of a Sunday was the gossiping and rallying place. There thoughts were thought and words were spoken which should have been forbidden by austere Sabbatical observance. When the bell began to toll, as the minister was seen emerging from the manse, the men sat clustered like so many rooks on the low, encircling dykes. Generally, when the long-winded preacher had dismissed them, they were in haste to get home to dine. But on this occasion, though a bitter east wind was souging through the boughs of the storm-twisted ashes, the male communicants remained in a body to give the pastor-elect an ovation. He had to shake as many horny hands, in proportion, as an American President at a

reception in the White House. Few have the gifts to take a parish by storm like that; but thenceforth such a minister, if orthodox, has a free hand; he is the revered and infallible pope of his own little spiritual dominion.

When the minister was married and settled in the manse, he might shape his course pretty much as he pleased. The moderates, who swore by patronage and detested popular suffrage, generally took life easily. Their dry discourses were as strictly doctrinal and dogmatical as those of the divines of the Georgian era in England. How well I remember a church whither I was taken on a Sabbath day's drive of four miles by the patron of the parish who disliked the duty of the observance at least as much as myself. Both he and that wearisome preacher punctiliously discharged their duties. Most of the scattered flock came from a distance and could not be expected to make two journeys in the day. So after the morning 'diet,' which lasted two mortal hours, wet or dry, we aristocrats withdrew to the vestry, while the mob were turned into the churchyard for a fifteen minutes' interval. By that time the old doctor had got his second wind, and we worked through the second spell of somniferous weariness. No soul could have profited by it, and, I fancy, no one was more conscious of that than the minister.

More likely than not I had seen him the evening before at the mansion house, for he was ever

welcome there. Dry as a stick in the pulpit, he was merry company out of it, fluent of jest, full of good stories, in which his brethren of the Presbytery were never spared. He was a favourable specimen of that particular Presbytery, which was a scandal to broad Scotland, indirectly doing more than any other to precipitate the lamentable Disruption. But our friend was lenient to the failings of his *confrères*, though in an unpublished epitaph he wrote for one of them, he broadly stigmatised him as the drunken departed. For himself, he was a merry man within befitting bounds, with a portly figure, a rubicund face, and a nose that had been coloured by whole casks of carefully matured spirits. Catch that minister making havock of his constitution by venturing on new Glenlivet or raw Ferintosh. All the clergy of that fine old crusted school were *bon vivants* according to their lights and means. As Christopher North remarked of himself and the Ettrick Shepherd, they were men not only of good but of great appetites. We used always to be on the look-out for their sending twice for hotch-potch or the solid Scotch hare soup, by way of launching themselves handsomely on the courses of a heavy dinner. They never pretended to be connoisseurs in wines, though they took kindly to port, and had no objection to occasional champagne. But the best of dinners would have wanted the coping-stone, if they had not topped off with tumblers of whisky toddy before joining

the ladies. To tell the truth, that toddy as a wind-up was not unwelcome to anybody. As a youth I used to visit in a somewhat stately mansion, where everything ran on rather ultra-luxurious lines, and the native spirit was ordinarily ignored. A neighbouring minister was a frequent guest; a leader of his party, he had more than once been Moderator of the General Assembly. A man of the world who had mixed much in society, he carried himself with the dignity of an archbishop. In his case an exception was always made. Instead of the coffee the butler brought in the kettle, and it was a sight to see the good man religiously mixing the materials. Every one followed suit; even southerners followed his lead; the claret decanters were swept aside, and sometimes tumbler succeeded to tumbler, till the company adjourned in indecorous hilarity. As for the archbishop, he was a seasoned vessel, who, though ardently religious according to his lights, perpetuated the traditions of the cultured Edinburgh school, where one of the most eloquent of moderate divines who married a woman of fortune, kept one of the most hospitable of tables, and was notorious for carrying more claret discreetly than any of the hard-drinking Lords of Session. It was averred that when a company of these jovial and fairly well-beneficed clericals came together to celebrate the close of the biennial 'sacramental occasion,' the merriment was fast and verging on the furious.

Michael Scott, who knew his Scotland well, sets Aaron Bang to describe such a 'Gaudeamus' in *Tom Cringle's Log*. 'Oh, the fun of such a meeting! the feast of reason, and the flow of Ferintosh, and the rich stories, ay, fatter even than I would venture on, and the cricket-like chirps of laughter of the probationer, and the loud independent guffaw of the placed minister, and the sly innuendos when our *freen's* got half-fou.' Aaron may have been censorious, if not calumnious—he was a Catholic—but I know our friend the Archbishop was never more in his element than when filling the chair at some dinner of the tenantry in honour of the occasion, or at the marriage of some parochial laird. With his quiet humour, his native drollery, and the tact with which he blended subtle flattery of the host, with compromising hopes and expectations of all that would be done for the farmers, he was an inimitable after-dinner speaker.

The minister made the most of his glebe and was a shrewd hand at a bargain over corn or cattle. He had seldom much chance of translation to a richer benefice, and when once settled in his parish he had struck his roots deep. He was sure to have a large family, and he was bound to give the boys a good education and a fair start. So he was always set on the augmentation of stipend, for which application was invariably made at decent intervals. As invariably the heritors



or parochial landowners showed fight, and the question was threshed out in the Teind Court in Edinburgh. Once in the week all the thirteen scarlet-robed judges of Session assembled to decide on the appeals. These interludes came as reliefs to the ordinary solemnity of the civil courts. The ministers were to be seen seated with anxious faces behind their agents and counsel. Facetious pleaders had the pick of the briefs, and all manner of ingenious arguments were adduced to show that the case for an increment was irresistible. As a rule, augmentation worked automatically, for it was indisputable that living expenses were on the rise, and the petitioner went back to his parish with his mind relieved.

Against those easy-going moderates, the evangelicals or high-fliers, as they were called, had been lifting up their testimony from time immemorial. They inherited the traditions of Covenanters and Cameronians; they resented the supremacy of the Law Courts in matters ecclesiastical, and specially objected to the abuses of patronage. I can remember the convulsions of the Disruption which stirred Scotland to its depths from Berwick to Wick. It had been preceded by the revivals which Mrs. Oliphant dramatically described in one of the best of her Scottish novels. They were somewhat similar, yet in striking contrast to the 'Holy Fairs,' satirised and ridiculed by Burns with too good reason. These Holy Fairs were



great sacramental gatherings, when the most sacred ordinance was made the excuse for drinking, feasting, flirtations leading to worse things, and every sort of unholy revelry. The revivals, which chiefly ran their course in the Highlands, appealed to the fervour and transcendentalism of the emotional Celtic temperament. Whole congregations were dissolved in tears, or thrown into paroxysms of desponding penitence. They had prepared the way for the Secession, which was precipitated by one or two strong cases of 'intrusion,' when the parishioners barricaded the kirk doors against an incumbent who could only preach to empty pews.

They may say what they like of the Scot looking closely to sixpences: when great principles are at stake, he will scatter bank-notes broadcast, and stint himself to keep up his subscriptions year after year. Four hundred and seventy ministers resigned their benefices, following Chalmers from St. Andrew's Church to the Canonmills, trusting their future and that of their families to the liberality of their lay supporters; nor was their confidence misplaced. I can faintly remember that memorable procession: the black-coated ministers leading the way, followed by an excited train of elders and laymen through the silent and sympathetic crowds. I was taken one evening to the vast, low-roofed hall of Canonmills gas-works, and remember the

fervour that filled the enthusiastic audience, straining their ears to catch each word from the revered leaders, as they stood forward on the platform. There were Chalmers, Candlish, Cunningham, and many others, each with his own following of ardent admirers, but sinking individual differences in a community of exultant hope and assurance. There were few laymen of social importance, but two stood forward conspicuously: Fox Maule and Mackgill Crichton. I fancy Fox Maule gave the movement his support purely from political motives. Be that as it may, I remember the effect he produced when he addressed 'The Fathers and Brethren,' in calm, impressive, gentlemanly accents—rather foreign to the general conception of his character—the smooth English accent contrasting with the Doric of some of the eloquent divines.

The urgent question was that of ways and means. To find stipends for five hundred ousted ministers, to build as many churches, manses, and schools was no light matter for a section of a frugal people, who, if they backed out of the affair, could find free accommodation in the parish kirks. If the dissentient clergymen had been carried out on a swell of enthusiasm, they were like to find themselves stranded. But from the first the rank and file came down handsomely; and when a Scot commits himself, he is slow to go back. I have been told that an uncle of my own set a match to the fire at a meeting of the leaders in

the first week of the Secession. Plans and strategy were being discussed on general grounds, when this blunt and impetuous naval officer got up and said: 'All that is very well, gentlemen, but surely it can wait: the question is, what each of us is to subscribe.' For himself, though by no means wealthy, he gave liberally with both hands, and he was only one of many. Another memory I have, as the Chevalier Beaujeu remarked in *The Fortunes of Nigel*. Effective speakers were sent forth to travel the country, and beat up subscriptions to the building and sustentation funds. One of the most effective and seductive was Macdonald of Blairgowrie, who everywhere had the welcome of a St. Paul, and described himself very truly as a red-headed laddie. His gift of persuasion was simply marvellous, and when he spoke of future returns upon spiritual investments, I doubt if Spurgeon could have been in it with him. And, like Spurgeon, he was eminently practical in his methods. I was taken by that relative of mine to a great gathering where he held his audience spell-bound, till having heated them with his own blazing fire, he came abruptly to his point. 'Now, what will you contribute weekly to the cause—out of your trade profits—out of your daily earnings? Think well before you promise, for there must be no drawing back; it is far better not to vow, than to vow and not to pay; but if you pledge yourself, put your solemn pledges on paper, if it be only for

a penny a week.' And straightway through all that crowded hall, there was a crackling of shreds of paper, and a general borrowing of pencils. The remarkable fact was that those vast annual subscriptions steadily rose instead of sagging away. The seceders had no monopoly of piety or benevolence; but after sketching the typical minister of the moderate persuasion, it is but fair to give this companion picture of the men who, for their convictions, turned out of the manse, at the risk of seeing their children on the parish.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SOME MILITARY MEMORIES

FROM ministers to messes is a sharp transition, but I must own that, as the Americans say, there was a time when I had more truck with the one than with the other. Twice I had nearly taken the shilling: once when I had actually the gift of an appointment to the Indian cavalry in the old days of the Company, and again when I was on the point of being gazetted straight off to a captaincy in a crack militia corps. I threw up the former under irresistible pressure at the eleventh hour; and the other bit of manipulation never came off, for the Lord-Lieutenant of the county declared at the last moment that he could not sign the commission or sanction so gross an abuse. No doubt his Grace was in the right, and I could only growl and resign myself. At any rate, as a Scotsman, I had the consolation of not having ordered uniform and outfit, as the Colonel had warned me to do. My hope had been to find a hundred recruits from the regiment, and on the strength of that public service be transferred to the line. Compelled to renounce dreams of military glory, I fell back in the mean-

time on military society, so that friends and relations used to chaff me about my brother officers. I don't know if the society was improving, but I do know it was very agreeable. The long peace had brought into the army men who were eager enough to fight if the chance turned up, but who loved to take life in piping times easily and luxuriously. They rather boasted of being Her Majesty's hard bargains, though really, from the pecuniary point of view, Her Majesty had much the best of it. The newly fledged ensign had the wages of a capable artisan, and was expected not only to live up to his position, but to launch out incidentally in all manner of extravagances. Of course it was a fellow's own fault if he did not cut his coat according to his cloth. He ought to have known the tone and character of regiments beforehand. Some were well-off but sedate, others were rich and reckless; in the line, or the marching regiments, as they were called, some were known to be constrained to a dignified economy, while others, like the Rifle Brigade and the 60th and the crack Highland corps, were on the borderland between the Guards or the Household Cavalry and the involuntary economists. Anyhow, all were capital fellows, bound together by strong bonds of brotherhood. For which very reason they tried to shunt any man who obviously was unlikely to suit them. They were really inspired by the best of



feelings in apparently rather ugly episodes, when field officers ignored the bully-ragging by sub-alterns, and the colonel, whose pride was in his regiment, serenely winked at the proceedings. On the other hand, I have known cases where a pauper of the right sort, who had followed an irresistible vocation with but a mere trifle beyond his pay, was lifted along discreetly and in the most delicate fashion. Somehow he found comrades who stuck to him as staunchly as in Kipling's *Soldiers Three*. Those impecunious ones had nothing for it but to wait for a war or the chances of Indian service, yet sometimes, if over-sensitive, they were cornered in painful positions. One case I remember which touched me nearly. In Edinburgh I had been hand-in-glove with a lieutenant of the 33rd or 82nd, I forget which. He had often dined with me, and I had so many acquaintances in his mess, that I scarcely noted whether an invitation ever came from him. The day came when, after a long and rather lonely cruise down the Adriatic, I landed at Corfu. The old regiment was in garrison there, and I climbed the heights to the citadel, to ask for my friend, counting confidently on a bright dinner and a merry evening. We sat and talked and talked, and still no invitation came. It seemed so inevitable, that though I surmised where the hitch was, I was only anxious to get out of the room; my old acquaintance was blushing to the roots of his carrot hair, and a comrade, who

made a third in the party, was the most embarrassed of the three. Sympathetic, I walked back to the hotel, past the saluting sentries, to try the Corfu cookery. Later in the evening the comrade looked me up; he had sneaked out of barracks as if he was scouting in an enemy's country, but he came to explain, for the honour of the regiment. My acquaintance was not only hard up, but in debt; he would not spend a shilling unnecessarily in the circumstances, but in intense humiliation and mortification, he had fairly broken down when I had left. As for myself, my visitor went on, I could not for the world have aggravated his pain by interfering. The little trouble cut both ways, for not to prolong his griefs I shortened my stay at Corfu.

That, however, was an exceptional case; as a rule the men, though seldom rich, were affluent or in easy circumstances. In the Highland regiments especially, which generally then had their depôts in Scotland, the majority were members of ancient families, and some were the heirs to chief-taincies and vast tracts of mountain and moorland. They all knew or were known by name to everybody. Whenever there was a county ball or dance, invitations were circulated through the garrisons with offers of hospitable quarters. I fancy the regimental business was carried on somehow, but three-fourths of the fellows seemed always on short leave. The great winter gaities in Edinburgh

came as matters of course ; it was the business of the Scottish military to support them. What crowded carriages there were, from Perth and Stirling, even from distant Fort George, to the balls of the New Club and the United Service ! Other entertainments were arranged for the same week, and how we used to keep it up on intervening nights at the Castle or the Cavalry Barracks at Piershill ! Musselburgh Races—a poor affair—or the more aristocratic racing of the annual Caledonian Meeting were always fair excuses for an outing. And when nothing particular was going forward, what belated symposia there used to be, in one of the Princes Street hotels, with jest and song and healths with Highland honours, winding up with ‘Auld Lang Syne’ and the right good willie-waught ! One of the last and the merriest, like the farewell banquet at Holyrood before Flodden, was when the first regiments were under orders for the Bosphorus, before the Crimean War. After that death was busy ; promotion came fast, and boys barely of age came back as full captains. The song of that evening was ‘The Maids of Merry England,’ by a gunner ; it brought down the room, but he seemed to have the shadow of his impending fate on his brow, and he fell behind his guns at the Alma.

Stirling used to be a favourite resort of mine in those days. Sometimes I put up at Campbell’s Hotel in the High Street, but I preferred the more

ample elbow-room of the hostelries at Bridge of Allan. There was no more delightful headquarters for romantic excursions, when the railway had been opened up the valley of the Teith. Before that, the fun was perhaps even better, when we used to organise driving and fishing expeditions on drag or dogcart to the Trossachs and the lakes and streams in the country of the Lady of the Lake. When I had renounced my dreams of military distinction for the ambition of being Lord President of the Court of Session, I retired one summer to the Dreadnought Hotel at Callander in July, for solitary and severe study of the law. Never did a well-intended scheme come to more dismal failure. Even when alone the seductions of the summer-time were almost irresistible. But when under a gloomy sky, with threatenings of a depressing drizzle, I had settled down to Bell or Erskine, I might be disturbed by the sound of wheels and the discords of a key-bugle. Then would come the tread of feet on the stair, and the inburst of a lot of jovial anglers. 'Never was such a day for Loch Ard or the Lake of Menteith.' There was no help for it; you had to go. Who could resist the sight of the rods; the knowledge that the carriages were charged with seductive hampers and lashings of good liquor, and above all the certainty of merry companionship? Successful or the reverse, those days of trolling and casting on Loch Ard were intensely enjoyable. It

did not need the so-called rusty broadsword of Rob Roy suspended to a tree before the hostelry to inspire you with the spirit of the novel. As you listened to the crow of the grouse-cock, the wail of the plover, and the whistle of the whaup, you thought of the gloaming when the Bailie and Frank Osbaldistone, cheered by the glimmering lights in the manse of Aberfoyle, were consoled by venison collops, and brandy in the clachan, after being recommended by the anxious landlady to bivouac in the moss-flow. As you revelled in the scenery or played with the vigorous trout, you felt profoundly grateful that times were changed and that you could count on a peaceful dinner at the Dreadnought before drinking the doch-andorras with your comrades from the Castle.

Many a time have I gone for a solitary ramble with my rod up the Allan from 'the Bridge' to Greenloaning in the springtide, and pleasant sport one used to have in those days, though the trout were small. The 'Banks of Allan Water,' famous in Scottish song, were fragrant with the honey-scents of furze and broom, and melodious with the matins and evensongs of the green linties. But the happiest outings I had there were in the depths of bitter winter, when still waters were icebound, and the Allan itself was trickling feebly between snow-crusted banks, through snow-flakes and ice-floes. The Caledonian Curling Club held the great annual contest between North and South



on flooded meadows close to the station of Blackford. The Black Watch was then quartered in Stirling, and many of the Highlandmen were keen curlers, and had been engaged to play for their local clubs. For days before the weather had been matter of intense anxiety, for if a thaw set in, the matches must be deferred. A good deal of money was staked on the event, though there were always optimists to lay odds on the frost lasting; nevertheless, at mess the evening before, with a cloudy sky, there was no little searching of spirit. It was joyful news when the man who called you in the morning, announced, like Sam Weller, that the water in the basin was a mask o' ice. Subalterns, who chronically detested the reveille, were on the alert and tumbling into their garments. The curling-stones from Clydesdale, Ailsa Craig, or Burnock Water, snugly reposing in their baskets, were carefully put in charge of the railway guard. We slowed off as we approached Blackford in a block of advancing trains; and already excitement was being wrought up to fever pitch by the roar of distant voices. Train after train, from south and north, had been disgorging their crowded contents, half-drunk with enthusiasm and prematurely primed with whisky. Cricket is not in it with curling for levelling of ranks and the assertion of meritorious manhood. It was a place of strange meetings. A Cameron or a Macdonald, the crown-prince of some ancient



patriarchal family, might be seen clasping the horny hand of a blacksmith from Badenoch, or fraternising with some stalwart poacher from Lochaber, notoriously in the habit of raiding his father's forests. Ranks were ignored and feuds forgotten for the day. If the smith was skip of the rink, his young master obeyed him implicitly. Scores, or I may say hundreds, of games were going forward simultaneously on the broad sheets of ice; fires were kindled on the frozen shore, where kettles were boiling and ale was being mulled; there was no lack of refreshments of all sorts, and the conviviality might have been deemed excessive had not the cold and violent exercise toned it down. The dusk was falling, the match had been decided, and the great gathering was breaking up. Then the players resumed their places in the social ranks. The smith made his humble adieux, pocketing gratefully the coins transferred in a handgrip; the poacher would have sneaked off shamefacedly had he not been recalled to get a ranker's modest commendation for his skipping. And whether vanquished or victorious, had not every one been in good-humour, there might have been free fights, as sanguinary, if not so deadly, as the combat of the clans in the lists at Perth. There were carriages in plenty drawing up, but what were they among so many? How the ruck got away before nightfall on those occasions I never understood—the laggards, I fancy, must have lain out

in their wraps or plaids—but I know that once I went back to Stirling on the knees of a drover in a third-class carriage, in an atmosphere reeking of spirits, foul tobacco, and perspiration; and on another occasion I travelled to Edinburgh on the engine, roasting and freezing alternately as I changed sides before the furnace.

Applications for leave thickened at the approach of the shooting season; for the most part they were generously granted by a sympathetic commanding officer, and then, I imagine, the regimental duties devolved to a great extent on the admirable non-commissioned officers, for the ranks were stiffened with veterans. Opportunities for sport were innumerable, and invitations were pressing. There were comrades who had forests in Badenoch or moors on Deeside or in Lochaber; some of them hailed from the wilds of Sutherland or the hills of misty Skye. And the unfortunates who were doomed to stagnate on garrison duty, looked forward enviously to the arrival of local journals recording the feats of their friends in the opening days of the season. It was poor consolation that disappointment was sweetened by the arrival of boxes of game from all quarters, till even sergeants and corporals began to sicken of the savoury meat as the Israelites wearied of the quails in the wilderness. Later in the season, hands were dealt out more indiscriminately and honours were divided. From social considerations the garrison

guns were always in request, for 'the Army' was quite as popular in Scotland with marriageable maidens and their mothers as in Galway or Kerry. A wagonette crowded fore and aft, loaded with gun-cases and portmanteaus, would rattle up to the door, when the long day would begin with an elaborate second breakfast. The sport might be good or indifferent, but the evening was sure to be a success. The host produced his oldest claret, and where could one get such Bordeaux as in those Scottish cellars of the olden time? It was late ere the bell was rung for coffee, and then the rooms had been cleared for the dance. If any of the soldiers had to go back for morning parade, they were handsomely launched on the homeward drive with libations of old cognac or mellowed whisky from the crested cut-crystal decanters on the side-table.

There were no better companions than the scientists of the scientific corps, and I ought to know. The engineers on duty, and the officers charged with surveillance of the survey, had their headquarters in Edinburgh, with no barracks, and they had to find billets for themselves. For several years I kept house with three of them; the fifth of the party was an artilleryman in the north on the recruiting service. It may be understood what manner of men they were when I say, that of the three engineers, not the least promising went off prematurely; that both the others died

generals and K.C.B.'s, and that one of them had been Inspector-General of Fortifications. In 'the Diggings,' as they were familiarly called, we kept open house, feasting in an off-hand way, and being feasted in turn by the various regiments. When 'at Home,' of an evening, there was always whist, with supper on the sideboard. Our opposite neighbours used to grumble at unseasonable hours, though admitting there were compensations, for the street was safe from nocturnal burglary, and the services of the police could be dispensed with. James Payn, who became one of my best friends, was a constant guest at our whist table; he was then editing *Chambers's Journal*, and always grumbling good-humouredly, like Louis Stevenson, at the winds from the Firth, the eternal sea-fog, and the drift of the whirling dust pillars along Princes Street, like so many 'dervishes of the desert.'

The engineers were men of culture, with a literary turn that attracted Payn. They had a talent for drawing as well as for triangulation; they were devoted to shooting and fishing, and many a delightful ramble I have had with them, as we roamed the length and breadth of Scotland. Often we found free quarters in some pleasant house where they were known and welcomed; more often, when duty led them into the wilderness, we tried the accommodation of Highland inns, or of rough hostelries far away from tourists' tracks on

the Borders, or in the solitudes of the south-west, where the hill-folk, hunted down by Claverhouse or Grierson, used to hide themselves in dens and caves, lulled to sleep by the roar of such a cataract as masked the lurking-place of Balfour of Burleigh. Everywhere were scenes for the brush or pencil, and streams with swift rushes and swirling waters, where you needed ask no permission to fish. We had evenings in the classical Tibby Sheils, on 'lone St. Mary's Loch,' redolent of memories of the Shepherd and the *Noctes*, and there we once forgathered with Russel of the *Scotsman*, who perpetuated the traditions of North and Tickler. A man so merry within the limits of becoming mirth, with such readiness of repartee, with so rich a fund of jest and anecdote, it has seldom been my fate to meet. I remember when arriving late at Elvanfoot, among the bleakest of the bare Lanarkshire hills, some sheep-fair being on in the neighbourhood, we were invited to take halves of the beds, already occupied by a couple of Dandie Dinmonts. That we declined, and as our shakedown was not specially tempting, we prolonged the sitting after a solid supper. My friend, who was of a jovial temperament, and had a fine voice, struck up 'Jock o' Hazeldean.' The melody drew; a farmer stumbled into the room, insisting on joining in a stentorian chorus. The other man followed, charmed at finding himself in good company, declared he was a first-class hand



at a bowl of punch, and forthwith roused the landlady to fetch the materials. With a feeble protest, 'Siccan a man as you I never saw,' she complied, and not only produced the spirits and sugar, but her husband. The upshot was, that the Borderers never went back to bed ; and that we sought our couches on the floor about the time we should have been getting up for breakfast. It reminded us of Scott's experiences among his Border hills, when, as Shortreed phrased it, 'he was making himself.'

In autumn the cuisine in the small Highland inns, if slightly semi-barbaric, was in its way irreproachable. If you took them by surprise, you might have to rough it on eggs and bacon, or a chicken, hunted down and 'brandered' off-hand as in an Indian bungalow. But give them notice in the morning before going out with rod and sketch-book, and there was no cause for complaint. Hotch-potch, or game soup, trout or salmon, grouse, and cranberries and cream was the invariable *menu*, and the grouse was generally forthcoming, whether poached or honestly purchased. On that score, like the Dominie when he dipped into Meg Merrilees' cauldron, we had no conscientious qualms. By the way, at Aviemore, and in some of the mountain villages near the sources of the Spey and Don, we varied the cranberries with averns, which are even more delectable. It is a mountain berry, only growing in the loftiest corries, and as little known as the



mangasteen even in the Scottish lowlands. There were inns that had their specialties, and kept up immemorial customs, where they invariably speeded the parting guest with a beaker of Athol Brose, a diabolically deleterious mixture, of which the main ingredients are whisky and honey. Johnson praised it once — theoretically — when comparing it with the Cornish ‘mahogany,’ which is a compound of gin and molasses. He was safe in asserting that it must be better, because the materials were better, which was not saying much.

Sometimes the officers’ visit would be to the little encampment, in some sheltered glen on the high slopes of such mountains as Ben Nevis or Ben Macdhui. The white bell tents, and the bright scarlet made a homelike show in these blustering solitudes, but once or twice, hesitating to bivouac in cramped quarters, we sought shelter in a convenient shepherd’s shealing, where we were assured of hospitable welcome; the embarrassment was that you caused an infinity of trouble, though it was evident enough that the visit was a pride and pleasure. The good wife welcomed the unwonted stir, and if the shepherd, used to solitude and the society of his dogs, seemed somewhat sullen of mood, it was manner rather than temperament. He thirsted for knowledge of the news of the day, and your talk with a gift of the latest of the county journals was an even more effectual open sesame to his heart than the tobacco pouch or

cigar case. The supper was somewhat of a trial; not that there was any shortcoming, for there were eggs and bacon, butter and cheese, and bannocks from the griddle. But as you were carrying no gun, you brought no game, and the 'braxie,' produced as the *plat de résistance*, was a dish to scunner at. It was mutton which had come to an untimely end—probably found drowned in the burn, after several days' saturation. Out of politeness you were bound to taste, and even seem to enjoy it; yet like the snails served to the Scotch philosophers, Black and Ferguson, it tasted 'd——d green,' and reminded one of the diabolical mess served to Curzon of the Levant monasteries by the Albanian abbot, which courtesy compelled him to attempt. The kettle was swinging from the hook over the peat fire, and sociability constrained us to sip more toddy than we cared for, considering the fiery quality of the raw spirit, but pleasanter or more informing chat on all matters connected with sheep-farming, wild winter tales and mountain superstitions, I never wish to indulge in. There were snowy sheets awaiting us, if we cared to use them, but not being fanatical entomologists, these we had learned to distrust. There were heather shoots and trusses of mountain hay in the loft above the outhouse, and no wearied man needed desire a more fragrant couch. Up betimes, after a plunge in the nearest pool, the shepherd gave us a long convoy on our next day's 'travel.' The

worst of it was, you could only repay him with a handshake, and you had no chance, as after using or abusing the hospitality of the Great St. Bernard, of slipping gold into a money-box behind his back.

Talking of dining reminds me of the old messes. Much of the change must be in oneself, from days when you had no liver, never dreamed of indigestion or insomnia, and when the spirits were ever ready to rise to boiling-point. But it does strike me that much of the old joviality is gone. Our officers may be more scientific, but they are less companionable and convivial. In those piping times of peace they were driven with loose reins, and there were no sumptuary restrictions. It was not quite as Lever described things in the West Cork militia, where every man backed his comrade's bills to any extent, till they actually became waste-paper with the discounting fraternity ; but under the purchasing system there was a flow of cash, and the mess was managed with large-minded liberality. Guest nights were frequent, apparently with *carte blanche* in the way of invitations, and one regiment never missed an occasion of giving the other that came as relief a magnificent reception. In the corps that prided themselves on going the pace, the monthly wine bills must have been something portentous. If a guest of the old time were dining at a modern mess, two changes would strike him particularly. Then in the regiments of foot all the faces were clean-shaven ; the razor only went out

with the Crimean War and the winters on the storm-swept Chersonese plateau. Then the friendly fashion of hobnobbing over the wine-glasses was in full force, and if you were bidden to the feast by a popular officer, before the *entrées* had made way for the joints, you had dropped into a circle of cordial acquaintances. I remember how greatly I felt flattered as a raw youth, when as the mess waiter touched me on the shoulder and whispered, I saw the grave colonel bowing and smiling. In due course subalterns and captains followed suit, and the general interchange of civilities made you free of the anteroom, when you adjourned for cigars, brandy and sodas, and limited or unlimited loo.

Much of the regimental money went for music, and though personally I think music a nuisance during dinner and fatal to pleasant talk, the band striking up in the anteroom gave a festal solemnity to the guest nights. Even unmelodious souls prided themselves on the music, professing to be critical, as the band was tending towards wood, or brass, or string. One thing I always did find overpowering, and that was the march of half a dozen pipers round the Highland mess table. The most characteristic part of the Celtic entertainment was the silver-bound quaichs of old whisky which circulated simultaneously, and it was a gladsome moment when the pipe-major, or whatever he was called, tossed off a scallop-shell at the president's elbow, saluted, and retired. But the devotion of

the Celt to the bagpipe is a sentiment and a passion. I have heard it with most complacency in foreign stations, when the wail of the pipes playing 'Lochaber no more' and the pathetic melodies of the pipers' native glens brought on a passing touch of homesickness. Merely a passing touch, for there were no more exhilarating interludes in a foreign tour than those when in the sunny Mediterranean you found yourself back again in Scotland or old England. Nowhere is the Briton more uncompromisingly British; nowhere do you more gratefully appreciate the power of the ocean empire. Never shall I forget the December afternoon, when, after the long ride from Algesiras, we spurred our fagged hacks to a canter to pass Gibraltar gates before gunfire. The smart sentry in scarlet, standing severely to attention, was such a striking contrast to the slouching Spaniard, even when mounting guard before the royal palace at Madrid. When we drew bridle before the Casino Hotel, the square-shouldered corporals and sergeants, with the stripes of their ranks on their arms, moved like so many princes among the mixed rabble of Turks, heretics, and infidels, Berbers, Jews, and Scorpions of the Rock. But it must be confessed they showed some lack of adaptation, and carried their northern habits along with them. In the public room on the *rez de chaussée*, with its sanded floor, was an overpowering odour of London porter and strong Edinburgh ale. Had



we come in summer it would have been exactly the same, and so it was in all the Mediterranean garrisons. Disapproving of such suicidal practices, nevertheless, I can sympathise. One spring I had taken a coasting steamer from the Isthmus down the Gulf of Corinth. We were bound for the Ionian Isles, touching at all intermediate ports. The weather was already scorching, the water in the carafes was lukewarm, and the only other liquor on board was the native Greek wine, impregnated with resin, and provocative of thirst. The sole chance I had of quenching that thirst satisfactorily was in a café at Patras, where ice was forthcoming, and where I robbed an orchard to fill my handkerchief with sour apples. When Zante was sighted, I could appreciate the sufferings of the adventurers who go fossicking for diamonds in Khama's Thirstland. Tumbling out upon the pier, I rushed into the arms of a British sergeant, and implored him to take me to the best liquor in the nearest tavern. And never shall I forget those draughts of stout, when I emptied two tankards in quick succession. The only case to parallel it was after walking from the Great St. Bernard to Aosta beneath the glowing chalk cliffs, when subsiding into a bath, with a salver of luscious figs, I disposed of as many bottles of Asti Spumante.

And I am bound to say the commissioned officers in their degree kept the non-commissioned and the rank and file in countenance. Next day I shifted



quarters from the Casino Hotel to barracks on the heights, where, sorely against the wishes of kindly entertainers, I insisted on being made an honorary member of the mess. A merrier set of fellows, with a more brotherly *esprit de corps*, I never wish to meet. It was comparatively cool Christmastide, when one might take liberties; and the essential merits of the regimental cellar were undeniable. But the staple liquor was fiery sherry, and it could not be said there was not a headache in a hogshead of it, though it only wanted maturing and a less tropical climate to make it delectable. In the Ionian Isles it was otherwise, for there the expatriated garrison did not feel bound to patronise the vintages of the country. Even the classical Chian is a tradition of the past, and Greek vintages mean colic, diarrhœa, or dysentery. The wines, like the cognac, came from France; they harmonised with the softness of a climate always tempered by fresh sea-breezes. Many an old soldier lamented the day when Mr. Gladstone handed those Edens over to the Hellenes. I remember trying my influence with Delane of the *Times*, when the proposal was broached, saying that the Premier's next move might be the cession of Gibraltar. He only said that the Minister who gave up Gibraltar should be hanged, and took no action in the matter. There was nothing more jolly than those mess nights in the Isles of Greece; and though I have mentioned a day when I went without a mess dinner at Corfu,

I was more fortunate on other occasions. Zante had its fascinations, but Cephalonia was charming. There was generally a mixed party at mess, and the talk ran on other subjects than pipeclay. Yachts or Her Majesty's ships were always coming into harbour. Men were arranging shooting trips to the Albanian coast, or talking over big bags and sensational adventures among shepherds, wilder than their own savage sheep-dogs, with whom nevertheless they had fraternised and drilled into tolerable beaters. There was a captain of a cruiser, now a distinguished admiral and a K.C.B., against whom I was always running up, at home and abroad. Fond of his jokes, he added a pang to my last farewell to Cephalonia. The Austrian Lloyd's boat, on which I had embarked, was leisurely slipping her moorings, when he steamed into the harbour and ranged up alongside. Standing on the paddle-box and catching sight of me, he bolted below, to rush up again and shake a grinning boar's head in my face, and shout out a fabulous total of his slaughter of snipe and cocks.

For myself, I always detested London in the season, and had I had unlimited means and the entry to the most select circles, should still have preferred the country or the Continent. But if you were in town, I knew no more pleasant invitation than that to the Guards' mess in St. James's Palace. It was little that the cuisine was as unexceptionable as the wines. But all the Guards were more or less men

of the world, and it was amusing to see the latest-joined subaltern, who had probably graduated at Eton or Harrow, striving, not unsuccessfully, to ape the airs and talk of the seniors. They might not be scientific, and assuredly they were not pedantic, but they had the light culture that sits gracefully on the accomplished soldier, and the tact that puts the stranger guest on easy terms with himself, though he may know few of their intimates and miss many of the allusions. Moreover, he was never absolutely alone, for a breath from a somewhat different society came with the officers on duty who had strolled through the Park from the Horse Guards. For dining with the Life Guards in their own barracks, you were conscious of a change of tone. You met Rawdon Crawley and Captain Macmurdo. The horse, in one shape or another, was a staple subject of talk ; familiars of Tattersall's, they had the odds on the favourites at their fingers' ends ; and with one eye on the Shires and the other on the livery stables, were ever open to a deal or a bet. They were undeniable authorities on the *personel* of the opera, the theatre, and the ballet ; but long years were to elapse before the music-hall or polo came into fashion, so they missed some engrossing topics of latter-day talk. Capital company they were, all the same, especially outside one of their drags at a race-meeting, though dangerous over unlimited loo in the small-hours, with the flush of champagne-cup and curaoa punch.

## CHAPTER IX

### SOME FLUTTERS ON THE STOCK EXCHANGE

WHEN I went eastward to the India House or the P. and O. offices, I was on pleasure bent: on my early visits to the Stock Exchange I combined business with pleasure, or at least with sensation. I know no better amusement than winning steadily, but it is long since I have renounced speculation, especially dabbling in new companies. More than I ever gained, they got out of me, and notwithstanding the recent decline, I am still convinced there is nothing like consols—if you can only afford enough of them. Very probably I should never have gambled if I had not gained heavily at the go-off. It was in this wise. I had a dozen or so of shares in the Union Bank of Scotland, when they fell ominously in a wild burst of panic. With all sorts of sinister rumours in the air, it seemed even betting on a smash. I did not fancy throwing my shares away, and if I held, the liability was unlimited—at least so far as my small resources went. Had I dreamed then of turning my talents to letters, I might have written an intensely realistic novel on the terrors of two horribly anxious days, though, by the way, the author of *John Halifax*,

*Gentleman*, had just then anticipated me. Then I made up my mind to 'go a mucker.' In spite of the solemn warnings of my broker, the only man in my confidence, I realised all the securities I possessed and put them into Union Bank shares. I was brought to that momentous decision by a chance meeting with an elderly baronet, a safe man and a sleeping-partner in the bank. He said it would be all right, and his smile was more reassuring than his words. He told me, moreover, that while the cashiers were facing the run and paying off anxious depositors, the rival Edinburgh establishments were sending in notes and coin by the back door. After all, I have some searchings of heart now, as to the strict honesty of my proceedings. True, if the bank went, I should be beggared myself, but that was no excuse for courting liabilities I could not have met. Be that as it may, I did it, and with brilliant results. The shares went up, rather faster than they had gone down, and on the strength of the relief and the stroke of good fortune, I straightway started on a foreign trip.

Some of the shares were sold to finance myself, and I should have done better had I parted with more, or stayed at home to watch the market. There was one of those reactions, which the experienced speculator would have expected. Nevertheless, on my way through London, the Tempter sent a second turn of luck. I dined with a clever friend, an engineer on Indian Irrigation



works. He swore by the Madras Irrigation, and induced me to buy 100 shares, a pound paid up, at a trifling premium. I have seldom enjoyed the English papers more than on that tour, which carried me by easy stages from Sicily to Trieste and thence down the Dalmatian coast to the Ionian Islands. Whenever it was my luck to open a *Times*, those shares were going up like mercury in the dog-days. We garrisoned the islands then, and the night I dined with the forces in Cephalonia, the shares were quoted at £5 or £6. It must be admitted it was doing fairly well to quintuple capital in six weeks or so, and so I was led to back East India Irrigations, which were by no means a success.

Then my relations began with Throgmorton Street and the old Stock Exchange. I was fortunate in an introduction to one of the most genial, capable, and fatherly of brokers, who afterwards established his claim to a Scottish peerage. He stuck chiefly to the American market; amassed a solid fortune, and the world seemed to go wondrous well with him. Always smiling, never in a flurry, he would give any amount of consideration to your miserable trivialities. Had I listened to him, I should seldom have burned my fingers, and should never have made the *coups* which tempt one to go on gambling. We hear of nothing now but stagnation on the Stock Exchange, and of packs of famished wolves reduced to worrying each other. Those were the golden days when prosperity was



advancing by leaps and bounds, and when the promotion of companies was the sure road to moneymaking; if you only cut clear of the schemes in time. Everything went automatically to a premium, and systematic staggering was a profitable business. It may be much the same now; I am sure I don't know; but I remember then that one used to be deafened at the swing-doors by the roar of boisterous business from the House. It used always to be a marvel to me, when your broker's name was shouted through the confusion how promptly he responded. My friend always came out beaming, and not infrequently afterwards, when he answered the summons, I was in anxiety or sore tribulation. Speculation in stocks is like *rouge et noir*, for even in normal circumstances the odds must be against the player. Then you waited impatiently while he went in again, and came back to report on the trend of the market. You had to make up your mind at a few seconds' notice, whether you would sell or hold. Sometimes you had plunged into troubled water, and after wading waist deep were up to the chin. Bombay had been booming during the American Civil War; speculators made great fortunes in Indian cotton; the old Indian Banks paying fabulous dividends were at fancy prices, and new competitors underselling them, were doing a roaring trade. Then when a pacified America began to grow cotton for export again, the bubble of that

inflated business was pricked. It was almost an oriental version of the collapse of the South Sea scheme. The shares of the Chartered Mercantile had fallen from—I think—about 120 to something over 45. I believed the Bank was sound; thought I saw my chance, and bought. Sadly disappointed as to elasticity and recuperative power, I saw the shares declining with dear money and a high Bank rate. The experienced manager of the Union of Scotland had warned me that those Indian Banks had breakers ahead, but like a fool I did not cut a trifling loss and sell. I never regretted it more than after Black Monday, when Overend and Gurneys put up their shutters. The news of the panic came to Edinburgh with a Tuesday's *Courant*; I walked the Parliament House that day in a worry, and as professional engagements were not engrossing, took the night train to town. The morning papers I bought at Newcastle, York, etc., were by no means exhilarating. Each speculative share I held seemed to be tossing in a bubbling caldron, with strong tendencies to settle to the bottom. My cheery broker, though depressed, was still optimistic, recommending me to see it out and wait for developments. That was my own feeling, and I tried to divert my mind, but I never had a worse time at the pleasant old Tavistock: the *Times* played the mischief with one's appetite for breakfast, and the latest edition of the *Globe* spoiled

digestion for dinner. Next evening, going down to dine at Norwood, I had lively company in the train. A knot of spruce young stockbrokers were talking shop, with the keen zest of the onlooker who has no personal stake on the upshot. 'The Indian Banks had it pretty hot to-day, but nothing to what will come off to-morrow.' They were true prophets. At that time Mr. Leeson of York had not introduced his Bank Act, and the bears might sell any number of shares, without giving the numbers as vouchers for ownership. The new Bombay Banks, whose shares had gone to a high premium on issue, were in the depths: distracted holders were ready to sacrifice their property on any terms which might relieve them of liability. 'If you care for a flutter,' said my broker's clerk playfully, 'you may buy Hindustans at 4.' I fancy they had been at 30 a few days before. I smiled grimly, for I did not care at that moment to increase my small holdings in Indian banks. My own Chartered Mercantiles were falling fast, and the Oriental, which was regarded by Anglo-Indians as a trifle more stable than the Old Lady in Threadneedle Street, was shaking on its solid foundations. That is the time when a man must come to swift decision upon momentous issues. I did not sell Mercantiles. I held in the faith that the weeding of weak competitors would send them up to something approaching the former fancy price. That blissful day never arrived, for with the close

of the Civil War, the Southern States were again shipping full cargoes to Liverpool; and I had leisure to meditate on the sage warning of the Scottish banker. Finally, losing patience I consulted with the financial expert who then edited the *Times' City Article*, as to changing my investment to the Oriental. Rather to my surprise, he strongly dissuaded me, recommending me, if I would continue to play on the same colour, to put my money on the Chartered of India and Australia. I should have done well had I taken that advice. But I did cut the Mercantile, which went sagging away, till it died a natural death, to be reconstructed; and I did not go into the Oriental, which burst up soon after, carrying desolation to Anglo-Indian investors, with a frightful smashing of rich civilians' nest eggs.

There is no denying that banks, with their uncalled liabilities, are risky. If one could afford consols it would be well to steer clear of them, but at least they give you excitement and a long run for your money, and there are times when your confidence has its reward. With stakes in the two great Anglo-Australian Banks, I ran the whole gamut of sharp sensations in the crisis of the Australian panic. There were storm signals which one ought to have heeded,—the difficulties of some small establishments at Melbourne, and the passing of the dividend in a big ironmongery store in which I had an interest, which had paid 15 per cent. when the city was booming. The

storm burst suddenly after all, and there was little time to strike or shorten sail, without heart-rending sacrifices of spars and canvas. Each morning came news of banks in good credit, stopping payment and going in for convenient 'reconstruction.' Things culminated one day when I saw in the morning paper the collapse of three of the best; I hurried off to my banker in the city, who said that when the Commercial of Sydney had closed its doors—a panic-stricken act of precipitate folly—he could answer for nothing. He had been so sceptical that he had sent a clerk to verify the fact, and theretofore he had always strongly advocated my holding. I walked across to take counsel with my friend, the editor of the great city journal, and he counselled in the same hesitating key. But he took me across the way to the Union of London, where they expressed the strongest confidence that my special Banks must pull through. A notable financial authority spoke in similar fashion, saying that the names on the Boards were sufficient guarantee for good backing, and that if the Bank of England did not come ostensibly to the rescue, yet it must lend efficient assistance underhand. In fact, I fussed as much as if I had millions at hazard, but then it was matter of material import to me, and in this case I did worry the trouble through, with results that have yearly been becoming more satisfactory. After all, as Mr. Squeers said of threshing a boy



in a cab, there is a pleasure in it too, so long as you do not actually come to grief. The fun of a race is soon over, when your fancy wins or is beaten. In stock broking convulsions, the excitement, sometimes tending towards agony, is long drawn out, but there are the blissful moments of temporary relief, when you read encouraging paragraphs in the city articles, and if you shoot the rapids and float off in smooth water, that sense of relief is simply paradisiacal.

Banks are chancy speculations at the best, but they are not in it with juvenile finance companies. Not even when you stand in with the promoters and are brought in on the ground-floor. When the 'House at the Corner' was converted into a limited company, I believe I might have had an allotment of a few original shares, under promise of not realising for the premium. But a wise old partner who had been bought out, gave me a glance over a glass of port, and I forbore. However, the mania of financing everything had set in; anything floated by such experts as Albert Grant went up like a balloon, and it was hard to resist the temptation of venturing. I tried my luck with the London Financial, launched with an unimpeachable Board under the presidency of an ex-chairman of the Hudson Bay Company. Fortunately for me, the chairman's promise of an allotment was broken, for the London Financial followed Overend and Gurneys to Basinghall Street. All



the same that speculative fever was catching, and I was bound to burn my fingers. I had been in the East; I had talked to attachés, consuls, and merchants; I had read various instructive works on Turkey; I had great faith in the resources and capabilities of the Ottoman Empire, if developed by British capital and enterprise. So the 'Ottoman Financial Association' seemed the very thing for my money. As I know now by melancholy experience, I ought to have cried off, and sold, when they gave me all the shares I wrote for. But it was my Kismet to embark on that rotten craft, and I shipped with some show of reason. A year or two before I had bought a small lot of Ottoman Bank Shares at £10—'entirely your own idea,' as my banker said patronisingly—and had sold at over £20. I bought in again, by the way, to scorch myself severely when Turkey repudiated. But to go back to the present venture, I had discussed Turkey as an inviting field of enterprise with the Hon. Thomas Bruce, then chairman of the Ottoman Bank. He was sanguine also, and meant to work for Turkish regeneration and good dividends to his shareholders, but on a large scale by deliberate methods, and with the powerful machinery of his influential corporation. Had I consulted him as to the Ottoman Financial, he would have laughed its inception to scorn. There were decent English names on the direction, but the majority were Greek, which in itself should have

made me distrustful. The only Turkish schemes we financed were some powder mills on the Bosphorus, which no company would insure on any terms. They did not blow up, but of course they collapsed. We lent and lost more of our money in a shady London Bank, and of all things in the world, we temporarily invested any superfluous cash in Swedish forests and iron mines which never paid a shilling. I presume the Articles of Association—which I never saw—were loosely drawn, or the directors dared not have indulged in such pranks. So long as the boom was on, the shares kept about par, and we had one or two dividends. Then they weakened, then they sunk, and one day I hurried eastward in a hansom, resolved to sell out at any price. By hard luck there was an announcement that morning that three new directors had strengthened the board; the shares had shot up, and so I held on.

Naturally the crash came in course, when in place of a dividend there was a heavy call. I went to the office and interviewed the obsequious secretary, with a Simian forehead, diamond studs, and gold-linked shirt-cuffs turned back to the elbow. The mere sight of the man should have been a warning, but he solemnly assured me before a cloud of clerk-witnesses, that the call would yield immediate returns, and that the company possessed a most valuable property. Next week it was in liquidation, and for the first and last time

I attended a company meeting. It appeared that the Articles had been so adroitly drawn, that we unlucky English investors were legally bound to pay off the Oriental shareholders in full. There was a second call and a third before we heard the last of that transaction. What impressed my innocence most was the obvious way in which the liquidator, an honourable man, I daresay, and certainly a member of a leading firm of accountants, did his best to shield the directors and draw the wool over the eyes of the victims. I said something at the time; I insisted on personally interviewing him; I had been doubly aggravated by seeing the secretary standing at his elbow through the meeting and prompting. I had told my story to the meeting, and taxed the secretary broadly with the shameless mendacity he could not deny. All the satisfaction I had of it then was an off-hand, 'If you had gone to the directors they would have told you everything.' And now when I represented that as the secretary had tacitly admitted himself a rascal it was scandalous to continue his salary and virtually to intrust him with the winding up, the worthy liquidator gave me to understand that in the interests of the liquidation he knew too much to be dismissed. No doubt I might have taken my revenge, for I could have subpœnaed witnesses enough to convict the secretary, but though the moral of this story is that of fools and their money, I was not mad enough to throw more

good coin after bad by trying to get damages out of a man of straw.

Mines were tempting ventures for those hastening to be rich, and, in my earlier days, a comparatively limited market. California was notoriously in the hands of Americans who were 'in the know,' and English eyes were generally turned to Brazil and the Central American republics. In a happy hour I dipped in Don Pedro North Del Reys, buying at ten or twelve shillings, and selling shortly afterwards for nearly ten times the money. In a happy hour, I say, not because I made money, for immediately afterwards they had it all out of me again when I went in for speculating in Nicaragua and Guatemala. But what with liquidations and calls, or selling out at an alarming sacrifice, I got such a sickener that though I struck a fair balance-sheet on the whole, I have never since been involved in the incalculable fluctuations of manipulated markets. If I missed the boom in South Africans, when Rands were steadily on the rise, I have spared myself all the subsequent sorrows of disappointments long drawn out and over-capitalised certainties. Years ago I came to the conclusion that the speculative investments of the uninformed outsider are simply loss and sorrow; and I give my experience for what it is worth. Gilt-edged securities are cheapest in the end, even if peace of mind were not a luxury well worth paying for.

## CHAPTER X

### LITERARY RECOLLECTIONS

My connection with literature began at the dinner given by his tenants to a cousin on the occasion of his coming of age. Though I had not attained my own majority, for some reason I was told off to propose the Press. I never shone as a speaker, and that was my maiden effort at public oratory. The toast was coupled with the name of the reporter of the county paper. Of course I tried the humorous line, and touched on a personal grievance—the bother there was in cutting the pages of books. He answered that if I had to cut up books like him, I would have better reason for grumbling. He had decidedly the best of it, but as Mrs. Gamp might have remarked, ‘his words was prophecy.’ Since then I have criticised innumerable books, good, bad, and indifferent, and though the pleasure and pain have been pretty evenly balanced, I have waded through considerable muddy water and endured more drudgery than was altogether agreeable.

But years were to elapse before I took to the pen which was to give me so many pleasant memories and acquaintances—to introduce me to



so many valued friends. The only break was when I met one of the brightest of those friends in James Payn, when, as I have said, he was conducting *Chambers's Journal* in Edinburgh. Afterwards we were brought into close and constant relations; some of the most agreeable dinners I recollect were in Warrington Crescent, where he always attracted lively company, and when he died the loss left an irreparable blank. There I heard Frith supplementing the amusing *Reminiscences* he published, and the present editor of *Punch* indulging in dry facetiæ which capped a story or pointed a moral. Payn introduced me to his friend Horace Pym, another genial host, who, when he kept house in Harley Street, often tempted me to town for a night, more for the company than the admirable English fare. When he shifted his quarters to my neighbourhood in Kent, at the distance of a long and hilly drive, I saw less of him. Something of a bibliomaniac, like Heber or Scott he went in for sumptuous bindings, and nothing pleased him more than the gift of the manuscript of any book by a friend which had caught on with the public. He might have made a name in literature himself, had he not been preoccupied with more profitable business. His *Memoir of Caroline Fox* pleased George Smith so well, that he proposed to him to undertake the biography of Lord Beaconsfield; it is one of the curiosities of literature that at



that time two leading firms were assured that they were to be intrusted with the immediate publication. Payn, then editing the *Cornhill*, was the literary adviser of Smith and Elder. As he told me himself on that occasion, he tapped his magnificent chief on the shoulder, whispering, 'Are you not getting rather deep in the thousands?' But Payn, except on a holiday in the Lake District, was never happy out of London or away from the Reform, where he had his regular afternoon rubber. Like Pym he never walked a yard when he could help it, or touched a fishing-rod or gun. So 'our own romantic town' with the biting winds which Louis Stevenson execrated had few charms for him. An indefatigable worker, Sundays and week-days, like his friend Trollope he could always come to time; working still, when crippled and confined to his chair, he may be said to have dropped and died in harness. In those latter days the only time I saw his sweet nature ruffled was when he misunderstood one of my remarks. Trying to write with his gouty fingers, he was evidently in great pain, and I made some commonplace observation as to the worse ills to which humanity is subject. He fired up and said, 'If you think I can find comfort in the sufferings of my fellow-creatures'—which I did not mean at all.

If after many idle years I fluked myself into a literary income, it is one of the wonderful instances of unmerited luck. When supplies are running

short, taking to letters is naturally the resort of the destitute who have been trained to nothing, or have failed at everything they tried. One fine morning, the turning-point of my fortunes, I took a flying shot at an advertisement. I had seen the announcement of a new Conservative weekly, the *Imperial Review*, with a hospitable invitation to contributors. I wrote to place my services at the editor's disposal, and suggested as subjects Turkey and America. Of Turkey I knew nothing more than I had picked up on a flying visit to Constantinople and sundry shooting-parties in the provinces; of America I knew nothing at all, but some American question chanced to have cropped up just then. Both articles appeared as leaders in leaded type, and thenceforward my career was decided. The *Review* was run by Cecil Raikes, member for Chester and afterwards Chairman of Committees. It came to a sudden stop, but it served his purpose and it answered mine. For a year or more it gave me capital practice, at the rate of an article or a couple of articles per week, and before the stoppage came which I feared and expected, I had been casting out sundry anchors to windward.

I had no sort of claim on Leslie Stephen. I was introduced to him in Trinity Common room by two old travelling companions—Augustus Vansittart, then Bursar of the College, and Hardy of Alpine fame, the first Englishman to climb the Finster Aarhorn. I had seen Stephen that

morning, with his tall, sinewy figure, going at a hand gallop along the banks of the Cam, cheering and coaching the Trinity boats. When Stephen promised, it meant generous performance. He gave kindly introductions forthwith to Cooke of the *Saturday*, and Frederick Greenwood of the *Pall Mall*—another good friend, of whom, as he is living, I have nothing more to say. Cooke had somewhat of a formidable reputation; he was said to be fastidious and capricious in the choice of his contributors, and as the hansom cabman said of Forster, ‘an harbitrary gent.’ Indeed, any self-made man had reason to be proud of having recruited such a constellation of varied talent. It was the pride of the *Saturday*, like Thackeray’s *Pall Mall*, to be written by gentlemen for gentlemen, and not a few of the gentlemen were predestined to exalted places in the Empire. Chief among the contributors was Lord Robert Cecil, who could handle his incisive and sarcastic pen with no fear of the impulsive slip which compromised him or the thought of ‘putting his foot in it.’ Faded daguerreotypes and primitive photographs hung round the inner room in the Albany, formed an interesting historical gallery of notorieties. For Beresford Hope, who launched the brilliantly successful venture, was lavish of money and could well afford it. The editing was sumptuously done. Editorial and business departments were sundered by the distance between the Albany and the

Strand. In the Albany the editor was supposed to sit enthroned from 11 A.M. to 5 P.M. There the Articles were arranged in cosy talk. Ushered into Mr. Cooke's sanctum in some fear and trembling, I found a man in striking contrast to his surroundings. Nothing could be more suitably luxurious than the fittings of the room, with its Turkish carpets, its massive furnishing, and the usual literary litter of an editor's den. Cooke wore a long, loose rough coat, something between a shooting-jacket and a dressing-gown, and a slippered foot stretched out on a cushioned leg-rest was suggestive of gout. The veteran was then in decay and drawing near to his end, but the old fire flickered up when he began to talk, flashing out from beneath his shaggy eyebrows. I had heard him talked of as a terror, but nothing could be kinder than his reception. Had I been Lord Robert Cecil, Harcourt, Stephen, or Venables, he could not have discussed proposals more respectfully. It was a great relief when the first proof arrived, but I should have been far less cock-a-hoop had I known that the *Saturday* sent all manuscripts straight to Spottiswoode's, unless indeed they came from an absolute outsider.

Almost immediately after that Cooke was gathered to his fathers, bequeathing his romantic Cornish home and the better part of his fortune to the family of his friend and patron. Had Beresford Hope not been born in the purple, or at least

succeeded to the noble Bedgebury manor in the Weald, with its wide woodlands, remains of the Anderida forest where iron industries had anticipated those of the north, he might himself have made a name in letters. As it was, he wrote some clever social novels, and I repeatedly urged him to try a historical romance, with the scenes in the historical surroundings of the family seat. Given to hospitality, his annual Greenwich dinner at the Trafalgar was a great help to his brilliant weekly. The editor took the chair, the proprietor sat on his right, and invitations were issued on a most catholic scale. Well and appropriately was the gathering fixed for a Saturday evening, for if the guests did justice to the cheer, work was impossible on the morrow. There you could absolutely trust the wines: the burgundy and the venerable port and amontillado came from the renowned cellars of Marshal Beresford, a noted *bon vivant*, who always kept a sumptuous table in the Peninsula, even when rank and file were on short commons. That legacy of the Marshal-Connoisseur had overflowed from the cellars at Bedgebury into the vaults of the Albany, and was far from exhausted when these premises were evacuated. At those Greenwich dinners there was mercifully no speechifying, and the grace was compressed in a couple of Latin words. The invitations were miscellaneous, for many specialists and men of note were in occasional relations with the *Saturday*. Lord Salisbury—as



he had become—was sometimes seated next to his brother-in-law, and their nephews the Balfours, promising young politicians, were often present. Medicine was generally represented by Quain, who was so keenly interested in literature and journalism that he would discuss them at length in consultation, oblivious of your ailments as of patients impatiently waiting in the anteroom ; and science by the aged Professor Owen in his black silk skull-cap. In the very last year of his life, I think, I travelled up with him in the railway carriage to Waterloo, when he left me with a cordial grasp of the hand.

When Cooke departed, Harwood, his sub-editor, reigned in his stead. Never was editing more conscientiously done. Harwood came punctually to the receipt of custom ; he carried business back with him to St. John's Wood, and was never to be lured away by invitations to dinner. When he retired to Hastings, on a snug pension, it might have seemed that, with his occupation gone his life would be a blank. But he was a man of resource, and turned Cincinnatus among his cabbages, concentrating his interests on a garden the size of a pocket-handkerchief. The amiable veteran had the satisfaction of feeling he had never made an enemy, and nothing gave him more pleasure than a visit from an old acquaintance and a chat over old days in the Albany.

The *Pall Mall*, as Greenwood kindly reminded me in an encouraging letter when I had begun to



contribute, came out every day, and there it had the pull of the *Saturday*. Those were happy times for the journalist who loved a long range and a free tether. Already I have passed Greenwood over in silence, but on reflection I must say that, with his versatile tastes and rare literary *flair* and discrimination, with perhaps a single exception he was the ablest editor I have ever known. Conducting simultaneously the *Pall Mall* and the *Cornhill*, his zealous look-out for rising talent carried him easily through a vast amount of drudgery. He could see at a glance what might be hoped of a novice. Nor did he confine himself merely to editing. Many of the political leaders came from his own pen, and there was no brighter or more sagacious literary critic, doing justice to talent wherever he found it, whether in history, philosophy, or a light society novel.

The reading world owes a great debt of gratitude to the spirit and enterprise of the munificent proprietor. George Smith originated the brightest of evening papers, as he started the *Cornhill* under the auspices of Thackeray. He has left his monument in the *Dictionary of National Biography*; he floated Charlotte Brontë in the beginning of his career, and Mrs. Humphrey Ward towards its close. When he started the *Pall Mall*, with his strong publishing connection, he found powerful allies, eager to aid. The chief leader writers who shared the burden of the day with the editor were

FitzJames Stephen and Henry Sumner Maine. Stephen, a legist by profession, with a legal and logical intellect, was a journalist by predilection. He used to say he would rather represent Northumberland Street than any constituency in the kingdom. Reluctantly he accepted a lucrative post in the East, but he hated Calcutta, never ceased to be homesick, and when he took his welcome release, hurried home like a schoolboy for the holidays. A telegram from Southampton announcing his arrival to Northumberland Street, asked that next morning a boy should be sent as formerly for copy to his chambers in the Temple. The boy may have been sent, but in Stephen's absence Maine had stepped into his place as leading leader writer. His brother Leslie, and Matthew Arnold were also of the *dei majores*; and among the irregulars who did excellent service were that very dubious character Grenville Murray, more admired than respected, with his double portion of genuine French *esprit*, and the eccentric Franco-Oriental, with the pseudonym of Azamut-Batuk, who amusingly satirised our manners and customs and launched rhyming philippics at our fogs and spleen.

The *Pall Mall* originated the *Occasional Notes*. No one devoted himself to them more conscientiously than Maurice Drummond, the most genial of entertainers and delightful of companions. In the literary capacity he took himself very seriously, which was more than he did as head of a Government

department, though he honestly believed himself the most hard-worked of officials. Regularly as clock-work he was to be found of an afternoon at The Travellers, skimming the morning papers and cogitating notes for next day. Always looking out for 'pegs,' he was admirably informed on many matters; he knew most people in London who were worth knowing, and had a memory that exactly served his purpose. Like that of Scott, it retained all he wanted and dismissed the rest. He and his charming wife were the most hospitable of people. You never found them unprepared, if you looked them up of a summer evening at their cottage-*ornée* at Frognal, where dinner was served at a table under a spreading tree in the garden. Du Maurier was a friend and a frequent guest; Drummond's children, who inherited their mother's beauty, were the models for innumerable pictures in *Punch*, where they figured with the artist's favourite dog.

George Smith, then or soon after, had a mansion hard by, on Hampstead hill, with sloping lawns and gardens looking over to Harrow. His garden parties were gatherings of the select, where you came across the noted *littérateurs* who were familiars of Waterloo Place, or thirled, as they say in Scotland, to the *Cornhill*. There was a bedroom in the Waterloo Place office, of which some of his familiars were free, when they cared to use it. Matthew Arnold slept there often, and Smith

was good enough to place it at my disposal when I passed a night in town. On an evening after one of those garden parties, some of us remained for a scratch collation and had sat on talking till a late hour. I remember the occasion well, for it was then I made the acquaintance of George Meredith. I happened to say to my host that I was only leaving one roof of his for another, and that, as I wanted exercise, I meant to walk to his bed in Waterloo Place. To my satisfaction, Meredith, who was also a great pedestrian and in the vigour of his strength, declared he would accompany me. That walk proved only the first of many with him, but seldom has the time passed more quickly, and as he warmed up in conversation, he stepped out only too fast. He had much of the buoyant Gallic temperament, with a flow of *esprit* to the very finger tips; mind and body seemed to be set on springs. As with the illustrious authors of *The Feast of Brougham* and *The Old Woman of Berkeley*, I have always lamented that Meredith did not give himself more to lyric and ballad poetry. That night as we were striding along, some of the spirited snatches of verse in his 'Legend of Cologne,'

'The lark and the thrush and the blackbird, they taught me  
how to sing,' etc.,

were ringing in my ears, and I could not help quoting them. Naturally, my unmistakable admiration pleased him, and I know it was with

regret and reluctance on one side that we separated at Piccadilly Circus. To my infinite pleasure, the acquaintance was to be renewed and improved. Shortly afterwards I took a house at Leatherhead, within an easy stroll of Burford Bridge, and many a pleasant walk we had afterwards, in the grounds of Norbury Park, sacred to memories of Fanny Burney, and in the adjacent lanes of the rich Surrey woodlands. Since then his rare genius has come slowly to be recognised; after a tantalising and disheartening struggle he has scaled the heights of the literary Pisgah, and had the fortune, in the fulness of years, to descend into the Land of Promise. He has taken foremost rank as an English classic, but happily he survives and no more can be said.

No one in habitual relations with the *Pall Mall* ever passed through Paris without looking up the Hon. Denis Bingham. From first to last, under the imperial *régime*, he was the journal's Paris correspondent: late in the afternoon, about the hour of absinthe—which he never tasted—he was to be found at the marble table behind an ink-stand, at one of the cafés on the Boulevards. For long the Cardinal was his house of call, though afterwards, for some reason he changed it. With his imperturbable coolness and Irish courage, he held to his post through both the sieges, seizing each opportunity of forwarding his letters, by balloon or underground rail. The



balcony of his apartment in the Rue de Tilsit was seriously damaged by the cannonade from St. Cloud. I have a shell now, picked up in his *salon*, which he consigned to me by Mr. Labouchere, when the 'Besieged Resident' broke out. I fancy it must have crossed me *en route*, for I was in the place a day or two after the entry of the Crown Prince of Saxony under the Arc de Triomphe. Bingham's household bills were curiosities. In the beginning he had been a good customer to the butcher of the Boulevard Haussman, paying fancy prices for beasts from the Jardins d'Acclimatation and des Plantes—elephant, rhinoceros, kangaroo, and all manner of outlandish animals. Then when supplies and cash ran short, he had been reduced to short commons. By way of souvenir he had kept some scraps of the abominable black bread, for which Marie, his good-humoured little *bonne*, had waited for hours, morning after morning, in the *queue* before the doors of the *Mairie*. In the siege of the Commune he ran serious danger. The Commune, in its truculent censorship, kept close watch on his proceedings, but showed him a certain consideration. It was perilous work to carry his letters personally from the Arc de Triomphe to the Gare du Nord, whence they were to be smuggled; and in the storm and slaughter following the entry of the Versailles troops, he was shut up for four and twenty hours in a house that was



bombarded by both sides impartially. Perhaps he owed something of his immunity to his relations with Rossel, for whom he had a sincere regard. Had Rossel not mislaid Bingham's visiting-card with the address, he might have found safety under his roof. On short commons in the first siege, he came near starvation in the second. The infraction of a cupboard in a house confided to his charge by a friend, gave him a luxurious Christmas dinner, which he shared hospitably with his special chum, Hely Bowes of the *Standard* and other journalistic *confrères*.

Laurence Oliphant was *Times* correspondent in Paris after the German siege and when the Versailles troops were being held at bay by the Commune. Off and on, I had known Oliphant for long. I met him first when dining in Edinburgh with Norman Macpherson, afterwards professor of Scots law. Oliphant, then a boyish-looking figure, had just returned from his trip to Nepaul with Jung Bahadur. He had cast that magnetic spell of his over the astute and seemingly impassive Oriental, and with his wonderful adaptability had become thoroughly at home with him. As his friend Walter Pollock used to say, 'Laurie would wile the bird off the bush.' He stole the conversation, rather than engrossed it, and his sparkling narrative, with the vivid pictures of Nepaulese manners and the march through the gloomy Terai was a thing to be remembered.

Oliphant might have been anything he pleased, but he lacked ballast, persistence, and concentration of purpose. His social gifts were a snare; his versatility was fatal; and he was never really happy, except in action, excitement, or danger. Emphatically a bird of passage, and in some sort in his early life a stormy petrel, wherever there was trouble he was skimming the waves, shaking the spray from his wings in sheer enjoyment of the tempest. He was the more plucky that he was a fatalist and a predestinarian. He was not an ideal war correspondent, for he risked himself too freely. I have been told by a *confrère*, himself by no means overcautious, that even the Zouaves blamed the Englishman's rashness. And, by the way, as a good judge of courage, he always maintained that the German dash and determination came short of that of the Americans in the Civil War. War risks he was ready to encounter, but he told me his nerves were never more severely tried than when he was on *Times* duty at Lyons, and attending a great socialistic meeting. Perfidious England was bitterly denounced, when the rumour somehow got about that a spy of the *Times* was present. The rabid mob were on their legs to hunt him out, when Oliphant jumped up with the others, and with his staunch friend Leroy Beaulieu began looking everywhere below the benches. Needless to say, he did not find the man he was hunting for.

After the German siege, Oliphant had an apartment in the Champs Elysées, where his mother kept house for him. There I was presented to the charming and accomplished girl to whom he was engaged ; and both mother and wife shared his chequered fortunes when his strong but mystical intellect succumbed to the influence of the American prophet. It was said that those refined ladies took their places at the washtub, and certainly Laurence hawked oranges on railway platforms, when his talents might have been turned to more lucrative account. The odd thing was that on his flying visits of Europe, he was still the quick-witted man of the world, the acute critic of contemporary politics. At Hom-bourg the Prince of Wales used to consult him on the morning letters. Frank as he was in his *Scientific Religion* and other writings, there were only one or two of his friends with whom he cared to discuss his religious views, and I was never one of them. Yet I remember one night at a little dinner of four I gave at the Wyndham, we drew him to the verge of the delicate ground, when in an unlucky moment I exchanged a glance with William Blackwood. Oliphant intercepted it, and shut up like an oyster.

Then, in the Champs Elysées, forenoon or afternoon, a *coupé* was always in waiting at the door. He was perpetually dashing about to the Quai D'Orsay or other places, hunting up the informa-

tion he generally secured. So he had no time to devote to the animated debates and scandalous scenes in the Assembly, which was in session at Versailles. He was then congratulating himself on the discovery of Blowitz, the most noteworthy of the treasure-troves, he said, among the submerged he had brought to the surface, and he said it long before that gentleman had attained a world-wide celebrity. He declared that Blowitz's memory was equal to the most exact shorthand reporting, and that as an interviewer he could mimic the accents and dramatise the gestures of the interviewed. When I next forgathered with him, it was immediately before the outbreak of the Commune, when he had discarded silken top hat and frock coat, and was bustling about the disturbed quarters of Paris in flexible felt and a suit of tweeds. I had been waiting for the convulsion that had never come off, and was waxing impatient. He warned me that I would not have to wait much longer, but one day, after inspecting the guns peacefully parked on the heights of Montmartre I went off carrying one of his packets to his agent at Calais. Two days afterwards the guns were seized by the insurgents.

Shortly after that his connection with the *Times* came to an abrupt termination. When I left him, I believe he already had his marching orders from the prophet, which he had disregarded. Then followed a more peremptory summons from the

seer, announcing a sign. The sign came on the day of the absurd demonstration of the unarmed pacificators in the Rue de la Paix, and he accepted it, when, in a shower of rifle balls, he was dragging the wounded under shelter in the doorway of Blount, the consul and banker. So much I heard from himself, and I heard more from Mowbray Morris. He went straightway to his quarters at the Chatham, packed his portmanteau and hurried off to London. It was the very moment when a special correspondent should have stuck to his post, and never did a *Times* correspondent give himself French leave in more summary fashion. But Oliphant, as a *rara avis*, was a privileged person, and the journal paid him the exceptional compliment of condoning the offence and employing him again.

A *rara avis* and bird of passage, there was no calculating his migrations. One month he was at Haifa or in his lodge upon Carmel, looking down, as he said, on the valley where Elijah slew the prophets of Baal, and settling disputes as a Syrian J.P. between the farmers and the vine dressers. Then a fancy would take him for the pavements of Pall Mall, and some fine morning he would stroll into the Athenæum, and shake hands as if you had dined together the evening before. I never met a man who had done so much, and who might have done so much more, who had so little self-assumption. He would ask an acquaintance if he might lunch with him as if he were receiving a



favour, instead of bringing inexhaustible stores of reminiscence and pointed anecdote. Now that he is gone I feel the old effort of disengaging myself from his company. If I gave memory the rein there might be matter for a volume.

Talking of Oliphant suggests my own connection with the *Times*, though it was to 'Blackwood' I was indebted for familiarity with him. I was fortunate enough to have the friendship of successive editors, and of all the editors I knew, Delane was the most remarkable. His intuitive perception, his sagacious prescience of the tendency of events, were only paralleled by his prompt decision. A message coming in at the last moment, pregnant with issues in foreign politics or home affairs, never found him unready. On one momentous occasion I had expressed my wonder and admiration to his brother-in-law, Mowbray Morris, for although utterly taken by surprise a few days had justified his action. Morris's answer was, 'It is those flashes of sure intuition that save him; if he were in the habit of hesitating he would often be blundering.' Yet he was no more infallible than other men, and sometimes when he waited his sagacity failed him. There was a notable instance when he was against the marriage of the Princess Royal, though even then he was not altogether mistaken, for the consequences he predicted were in some measure realised by the strained relations of her Royal Highness with the autocratic chan-



cellor, who resented, and sometimes in the most offensive language, feminine influence in business of state.

Like Wellington and all brilliant commanders he had a contempt for any feebleness of moral fibre. The editorship was offered him at the age of twenty-four—the mantle of Chatham was falling on the shoulders of the younger Pitt—and I remember when we were having a quiet talk in Serjeants' Inn, asking if it did not shake his courage. 'Not a bit of it,' was the reply; 'what I dislike about you young fellows is, that you all shrink from responsibility.' Precisely what Wellington said, somewhat unjustly, of his subordinates in the Peninsula. Nor was there any boastful self-assertion involved, for I have heard the story from his life-long friend, John Blackwood. The youths were living together in St. James's Square. One morning Delane burst into their room, exclaiming, 'By God, John, what do you think has happened? I am editor of the *Times*.' Forthwith he buckled to the arduous task, and from the first Printing House Square acknowledged the master.

It is not easy for outsiders to estimate the responsibilities he shouldered so lightly. The youth had inherited the traditions of an immense though occult power. The *Times* had unseated domineering ministers, had shaken strong cabinets, had made continental ministers tremble. Under the *régime* of the citizen king, the French foreign

minister had tampered with the transmission of *Times* despatches. Promptly, and regardless of expense, the *Times* accepted the challenge, and the French cabinet had the worse in the war. Much had been happening to increase the power of the Press. There had been a reduction of the stamp duty and the advertisement tax, and the circulation of the papers, increasing by leaps and bounds, had awakened the intelligent interest of the masses. We hear in the Greville *Memoirs* of Lord Durham dropping in upon Barnes to complain of articles which had stung King Leopold and embarrassed the British ministry. Apropos of communications between the *Times* and Wellington touching the revelation of Cabinet secrets, Lyndhurst had exclaimed in a burst of annoyance, 'Why, Barnes is the most powerful man in the country!' In the same year Peel, the most reserved and discreet of statesmen, wrote effusively thanking the editor for 'his powerful support.' Such was the responsibility the youth manfully took over from an accomplished veteran, versed in intrigue, callous to flattery, and hardened to strife.

He picked his subordinates well, and had a sure eye for the qualities which make the popular journalist. Asked for help with the authorities at the Colonial Office by a future Colonial governor, Sir Frederick Broome, he tapped his ink-bottle, saying, 'You have your fortune here if you stay with me,' and for years he kept a valued con-

tributor who did excellent work on important missions. Broome subsequently went as Colonial Secretary to Natal, with the editor's free consent and recommendation. But Delane naturally resented being left in the lurch, or unceremoniously thrown over for a better thing. One of his leader-writers, a man whom he greatly appreciated, and a charming *convive*, accepted an important governorship without giving warning or coming to a satisfactory explanation. He proved somewhat of a failure in the new sphere of action, and came back to find the gates of Printing House Square locked and barred. These men were only two of many who had served their apprenticeship to statecraft at home and abroad under Delane.

Personally, he did the day's work in Serjeants' Inn within easy reach of the office. The door was guarded by his confidential servant, a smooth-spoken and gentlemanly Cerberus, who knew habitual callers well; and admission may have rather depended on the master's mood than on the urgency of the incessant preoccupations. But an interview, and a very leisurely one, was assured when the visitor was fresh from foreign parts, especially when he had returned from a *Times* mission. For Delane, who was deeply versed in foreign politics, was the most many-sided of men. When he gave himself a breathing on the Continent for a brief holiday, the goose-fair in the Vienna Prater or the morning market in picturesque Bamberg,

interested him as much as the details of some secret treaty being manipulated between Paris and Berlin. My old acquaintance, General Eber, ex-insurgent, ex-lieutenant of Garibaldi, member of the Hungarian Diet, *Times* correspondent at Vienna, was one of his favourite travelling companions, and Eber used to say that in all his experience he never met any one with so universal an interest in things, great and small. Necessarily a late sleeper in London, abroad he was an early riser, and liked nothing more than the morning stroll about the streets of some quaint old German city. He had a great predilection for Mayence, where he put up at the Angleterre, a capital house looking out on the river, but with a noisy thoroughfare in front and a darksome lane behind. The landlord was his sworn friend, and boasted a vintage of Feuerberger to which Delane directed my special attention. He always believed in good holidays, both for himself and the members of his staff. But as he grew older he was less inclined to ramble, and when he found himself in congenial quarters he was loath to leave them. One autumn he went to Scotland 'for a round of visits.' When he came back I asked where he had passed his time, and he had to own that he went straight to Dunrobin, where he was made so comfortable that he never stirred. In Dunrobin he delighted, but on another occasion his visit there was brought to an abrupt termination. He gave his trusted leader-

writers a loose rein, but sometimes as strong men, with pronounced views on burning political questions, conscience and conviction would make them jib or kick over the traces. One fine morning in Sutherlandshire, when the editor opened his *Times*, he was shocked and startled. It was on the eve of the war between Russia and Turkey; the writer's sympathies were strongly Russian, and he had gone far towards committing the paper. Delane took the first train to town to put things straight before the error was irretrievable. But he knew a good contributor when he had one, and the delinquent, with light reproof, was put on to less thorny subjects.

Probably he never wrote a line for his own paper, though he played on its manifold keys with the touch of an accomplished artist. The most ready of note writers, he seemed to be always scribbling, and no one ever despatched multifarious business more promptly or pointedly. Half a dozen lines smeared across a page of notepaper with a broad-pointed quill indicated the lines of an important article, and gave assurance of safe guidance. But as I happen to know, there is a single document extant, in which he virtually embodied a leader in a succession of blue paper slips. That shows how strongly he was excited over the formation of Disraeli's Ministry in 1874. Ordinarily he took the most sensational incidents with the most imperturbable calm, even when the



credit of the journal was in question ; and of that I could give various examples from personal experience. Reviewing was generally left to the writer's discretion, but as to important political works, such as Campbell's *Lives of Brougham* and *Lyndhurst*, or Gladstone's *Fragment of Political Autobiography*, he would take infinite trouble, even to arranging a dinner of experts that the writer might be authoritatively primed.

He bore his honours meekly, though, indeed, with his recognised autocracy, he had slight inducement to assert himself. He dressed carefully, though he never sacrificed to the Graces. But few statesmen or politicians drew more notice in Rotten Row than the unobtrusive rider on the neat black cob. It was not with the butterflies of fashion that he exchanged greetings, but with men and women of light and leading. It was a rare experience to have his arm up St. James's Street and Piccadilly in the season, when the stream of members was setting of a summer afternoon towards the House, and to listen to his amusing commentary of anecdote and reminiscence, interspersed with incisive sketches of characters and careers, suggested by passing personalities. As no one had greater regard for a formidable political opponent, so no one had less respect for the dilettante diplomatist who had climbed to high place through influential connections. Once, coming back from the Continent, I reported some



conversations with our ambassador at one of the great capitals. I was flattered, and rather vain of them, for the big man's condescension and champagne had made a highly favourable impression. Delane listened and abruptly changed the subject. 'Oh, that old woman. . . . Yes, she's always making love to us, and can be very civil when she likes!'

His eclipse was gradual and for a time veiled to the public. Worn with arduous work and incessant strain, at last the strong constitution gave way. His good friend Sir Richard Quain did all that science could do to prolong a valuable life; but retirement became inevitable, though doubtless retirement, with the loss of stimulus, accelerated collapse. Nor was the final disappearance of this remarkable man from the society he had instructed, guided, and adorned long to be delayed.

Delane, while directing the *Times*, was deeply indebted to the co-operation of his brother-in-law, the manager. He and Mowbray Morris invariably worked together on the most confidential terms, and Morris was something more than a sleeping partner in the editorship. General Eber used to say that when Delane got too engrossed in political topics of the day, Morris was always there to tap him on the shoulder with a reminder. He might have filled the rôle of editor as well as that of manager, and he knew it. At the outbreak of the Franco-German war, Delane chanced to be abroad,

and I remarked casually that he would be annoyed at his absence from the helm at so critical a moment. Morris rejoined, rather tartly, 'Do you think then that our readers will know he's away?' Like all the men who have had a voice in the policy of the great journal, he identified its honour with his own. To touch the *Times* was to touch himself. He used to pride himself on having, for the first time, put the foreign correspondence on a business-like footing in accordance with modern demands. The world had been moving since Crabbe Robinson went to Hamburg from Printing House Square to furnish letters as he found opportunities, based upon rumours rather than facts. Yet, like his brother-in-law, when he indulged in a brief outing, he loved to leave the Square behind. He used to say that when he could not keep his incognito, nothing worried him more than the attentions of obsequious waiters, who would smooth out the *Times* on his table. He was a man of imposing presence, with a dignity befitting his position. As Power to Power, he was indignant with the Germans, when they refused to receive his correspondents in their camps. 'But we have plenty of money in the treasury, and the public shall be informed all the same.' An exception was afterwards made in favour of Russell, on King William's personal guarantee, and Morris was soothed. But his indignation was roused again, when Russell, with his bold criticism

and inquiring mind, was cold-shouldered by the statesmen and generals at Versailles. 'Yet they know well we are recording history for them, and transmitting their names and fame to posterity.' If Delane broke down slowly, Morris, to all appearance, went with a crash. Two or three years before he had lost a *fidus Achates*, a sort of humble secretary, whose intimate knowledge of details saved him an infinity of trouble. The man died suddenly; his loss was felt in every way, and I have always thought his master took it as an ominous warning.

## CHAPTER XI

### MORE LITERARY RECOLLECTIONS

THERE was much wild speculation as to Delane's successor. More than one member of the staff was named as being in the running, and gossip insisted with great confidence that the mantle was to light on the shoulders of a distinguished Government official. The knowing ones were all wrong ; no one named the winner, and the decision came as a surprise. One evening when dining with Mr. Stebbing—he had virtually edited the paper in Delane's decline—I made the acquaintance of Mr. Chenery, an eminent Orientalist, Professor of Arabic at Oxford, and one of Delane's most valued collaborators. That evening was the beginning of a fast friendship, prematurely ended to my bitter regret. We walked together from Russell Square to Oxford Circus, and stood talking for some time under the lamps, before we shook hands. As Chenery told me afterwards, 'that evening I had my commission in my pocket.' In many respects he was admirably equipped. A fluent linguist, he was versed in foreign politics, and had discussed them in innumerable articles. He had a wide literary and scientific connection ; he laid himself

out to secure the assistance of specialists, and as he remarked complacently a few years later, he might pride himself on the number of his accomplished contributors. The advertisements, he added, were then at high-water mark, a proof of the steady popularity of the paper. Yet he could scarcely be called a popular editor, and through the Parliamentary session, even more than Delane, he was absorbed in politics, to the neglect of literature and lighter matters. Moreover he had taken to the leadership too late in life, and the burden of daily care weighed heavily upon him. The most charming of companions in a quiet way, he had not his predecessor's social adaptability. But the editor of the *Times* must entertain, and no man was more inclined to be hospitable. He was a cultured *gourmet* besides, and had a delicate taste in vintages. At his house in Norfolk Crescent, and afterwards when he moved into Delane's quarters in Serjeants' Inn, you were sure to find yourself among celebrities or in elevating company, though the host listened, rather than led the talk. There were statesmen, politicians, travellers, and scientists; there were cultured soldiers who have since made themselves famous, and officials of the Foreign or Colonial Offices, who have become ambassadors, ministers, satraps of provinces—Chenery could pick and choose. But though that part of his duties was the reverse of disagreeable, he was never more happy than when at the table in the north-east

corner of the Athenæum dining-room, with his habitual cronies, reinforced by casual arrivals. Hayward, who in his later years seldom cared to dress and dine out, was a regular member of the little party. There I have heard Forster relate some of his anxious experiences as Irish Secretary, when he narrowly escaped the fate of Lord Frederick Cavendish. He little knew that his most providential escape was on the very evening when he left Ireland behind him. The agents of a gang of assassins were on the watch at Westland Row, ready to communicate with their principals at Kingston. But Forster, as it chanced, had gone down before to dine quietly in the Kingston Hotel, and slipped unobserved on board the steamer at the last moment.

In that select company of the corner were often to be found Lord Monk and another brilliant Irishman, Sir William Gregory, who had made his political *début* by boldly facing the Liberator on the Dublin hustings, and who had attained to the blue ribbon of the Colonial Office as Governor of Ceylon. A warm-hearted Irishman he was, and a staunch friend. The only time there was any bitterness between us was when I impeached the hospitality of Sir Philip Crampton, our ambassador in Madrid, who always kept open house for Gregory. It was in that corner Sir Robert Morier commented one evening on the penny-wise policy of the Foreign Office, in refusing to ratify his bargain with the



Portuguese Government for the purchase of Lorenzo Marquez for some £30,000. We had reason to remember his words of wisdom when we went to war with the Boers.

Kinglake and Hayward, habitual *convives*, though not always the most talkative, were the radiating lights. The best of friends, they delighted in sly digs at each other, and the subtle challenge was readily accepted. When they got on their reminiscences, they were like rival gamecocks, and the rush of social and political anecdote was incessant. The historian of the Crimean War had been the arbiter of many heated disputes and the Rhadamanthus of challenged reputations; I happen to know that men in the highest positions had stooped to depths of servility in courting him. He weighed his judgments as deliberately as he wrote his history. One day I had dropped in upon him in his rooms looking out on Hyde Park; the table, as usual, was piled with documents, and like Issachar, the strong ass was stooping between two sacks of papers. He was painfully mastering the Bala-klava case—Lucan against Cardigan. Grievous trouble he caused his publishers and their printers, with his perpetual rectifications of the narrative and corrections of the proofs. A kindly man, and specially genial to young literary aspirants, he dearly loved an epigrammatic sneer. One saying of his Sir Edward Hamley delighted to quote. Looking at Mr. Villiers, the veteran free-trader,

then father of the Commons, as Villiers stood contemplating the dinner *carte*, Kinglake remarked with his meditative drawl: 'A clever man, a very clayver man, before he softened his brain by reading the newspapers.' With the sole exception of Sir Edward Bunbury—a very treasury of recollections and miscellaneous knowledge of all kinds, when he could be drawn in a quiet *tête-à-tête* over the dinner-table—Kinglake lingered on, the last of that company. It was sad to see him in his solitary seat, in the nook which had for so long been the centre of sociability; to stand at the old man's shoulder and to speak to him loudly and in vain.

Hayward had gone some years before; though close allies, they were great contrasts. Hayward, although he could make himself extremely agreeable, was acidulated and inclined to be cynical. He took fancies at first sight, and his prepossessions were as strong as his prejudices. I first met him at a dinner at Delane's, where George Venables put him on his mettle, and they set to capping stories and repartees, while the host looked on and laughed. Our next meeting was at Chenery's, where, seated next each other, we had much talk, and it was then I really made his acquaintance. On fine nights he always walked home to his rooms in St. James's Street or to the Athenæum, and then, as with Meredith and Chenery, I had a happy opportunity. We walked together from Norfolk Crescent to the club: I forget what subject had engrossed

us when we got into the drawing-room, but I know Hayward was so animated when I had subsided into a chair, that he stepped gradually between my legs to bring it forcibly home to me. That was characteristic of the man, and the matter was probably political. Though always a staunch supporter of Chenery's, he never quite forgave him for the independent line he took in editing. 'I thought we could count upon him,' he once complained; 'I introduced him to Lady Waldegrave, and now——!' Chenery, who cared nothing for the fashionable world, was not to be seduced by the blandishments of the sirens. To the last Hayward went on with literary work, though in an easy dilettante fashion by which his readers lost nothing. Latterly, as he told me, he confined himself to his four annual articles for the *Quarterly* and his old friend, Dr. Smith. He stuck to the *Quarterly*, although he had changed his politics, having taken his name off the Carlton many years before. Perhaps we may gather from his *Art of Dining*, that gastronomical considerations had something to do with that, for there he says that the once famous cookery at the Carlton was declining, and that of the Athenæum coming on. Since then, he might have had reason to change his opinion. He was less finically fastidious about his proofs than Kinglake, but he had a strong objection to his text or style being tampered with. I have seldom seen him more bitter than when he complained that in

the *Cervantes* which he had been writing for Blackwood's 'Foreign Classics,' the Edinburgh readers had been changing his 'shalls' into 'wills.'

Chenery, like Delane, was fond of touring, and loved to take his recreation abroad on flying trips. He sought out objects of historical interest, but could amuse himself as well with the *dolce far niente* when nothing more exciting was to be had. He was a *bon vivant* and a connoisseur of the French *cuisine*. I had rooms one spring at the Brighton at Boulogne, where I was agreeably surprised by an early call. He had crossed by the night boat and was putting up at the Bains. The *chef* of the Brighton was an artist, and Chenery thoroughly appreciated my daily breakfast of a sole fresh from the Channel with a single squeeze of lemon and a creamy *omelette aux anchois*. When he broached the object which had brought him over, he was somewhat disappointed, for much as I should have enjoyed it, I could not accompany him on a visit to the battlefields of Cressy and Agincourt. But he was soon resigned, and made himself perfectly happy in lounging on the pier and strolling about the historical neighbourhood.

He ought to have been his own Paris correspondent; and had such been his fortune, his days would have been prolonged. A Barbadian by birth, he was a Parisian by taste and inclinations, and life on the boulevards was genuine luxury

to him. His interests were various as his amusements. He was as much in his element when prowling about the bookstalls on the Quai D'Orsay, or collating Arabic manuscripts in the National Library, as when breakfasting at Brebant's, dining at Philippe's, or laughing in the stalls at a blood and thunder melodrama at the Porte St. Martin. For, on the whole, he preferred sensation or the humours of the Bouffes or the screaming and somewhat scandalous farces of the Palais Royal to the classical art of the Français. When the morning was specially fine, he was all on the alert for some excursion. One of our pleasantest was to St. Germain, where, on the terrace with the outlook on the forest, and over a *recherché* little dinner in the Pavillon Henri Quatre, he became volubly eloquent on memories of the wars of religion and the shadowy court of the exiled Stuarts. Unfortunately, unlike Morris or Delane, he could never leave that weary paper of his behind him. Eagerly he tore the *Times* open, to smile or frown, as the case might be. The morning of a happy day at Fontainebleau was overcast by something absolutely trivial as to a pork corner at Chicago which could have affected no living soul except speculators immediately concerned. But the clouds passed with a forest drive, and Richard was himself again when we were being promenaded through the palace, with its wealth of tragical and pathetic associations.



Blowitz had then become a Power, and we saw a great deal of him. His principles may have sometimes been subordinated to his journalistic ambitions, but he was in strong sympathy with the Republican *régime* when he succeeded Hardman as recognised *Times* correspondent; and assuredly no journalist had a keener political *flair* or exerted greater political influence. He made no idle boast when he said in his *Memoirs* that he had saved France from a second and more disastrous invasion. His friend, Frederick Marshall,<sup>1</sup> wrote me in 1878—he and Blowitz used to meet every morning—that they never went out for a stroll and cigar, without seeing the Prussians passing again under the Arc de Triomphe. So he was stirred to take decided action in the interests of peace. I had personal proof of the weight he carried with the French ministers. I had mentioned casually to him that an English governess, in whom my family were interested, had married a French revenue officer, and was bored to death in dull quarters on the frontiers of Lorraine. A few weeks later that official was transferred to a lucrative post at Lille. I told Blowitz as a strange instance of human discontent, that the lady was no happier at Lille, where she objected to the murky atmosphere. The lady was promptly shifted to the sunnier climate of the Gironde. In still later days, the levée in his little antechamber was

<sup>1</sup> Marshall died after this was written.



crowded, and he was then more difficult of access to outsiders. He liked to give his busy brain some rest, or was absorbed in the pregnant meditations which flowed fast from his ready pen. Hurrying through Paris with a commission for some letters for the *Times* from the Riviera, I called to ask for political introductions to Nice. He snatched at my hand, said he was too hard at work thinking to talk, and scribbled off two lines on a couple of cards for the Préfet and the British Consul. From both the dignitaries I had all the assistance I could desire. Great was Blowitz's pride in the first and only journal, of which he would have said *maxima pars fui*. His dinner hour coincided with the *Times* delivery, and one evening, after a *tête-à-tête* we had adjourned for coffee to his den. He opened the paper eagerly as if he had never seen it since Oliphant showed it him for the first time when offering an engagement. He spread it out voluptuously on the table, saw two columns of his telegraphed letter, clasped his hands, threw up his eyes, and ejaculated, 'Isn't it beautiful?'

Next to John Delane, there is no one to whom I have been more indebted, from the literary point of view, than John Blackwood. In all my relations with many editors, never did the element of strong personal attachment enter so largely as with him. Frank to a fault, you could always trust him, and when you had once won his friendly regard, it

never failed. As I knew from second-hand knowledge, he would stand the trying financial strain on which so many fast friendships have made shipwreck. A contributor for whom he had a special affection had an awkward habit of outrunning the constable. Once, as he told me, being exceptionally hard up he bowed his pride to appeal to Blackwood. He put it playfully: he said that the greatest writers had always been in the habit of making their publishers their bankers, and he asked a very considerable advance on the faith of unearned increment. He had put it playfully, but he awaited the answer in fear and trembling; for he dreaded a refusal, and the rupture, which he would have regretted far more. I saw the reply, and it was a model letter. There was a wise and well-deserved warning as to the imprudence of a young man discounting the future by exceeding a sufficient income. Then the sting was taken out of the kindly reproof by the enclosure of a cheque for the amount requested, with an intimation that future drafts of the kind might possibly be honoured. The editor knew his man, and knew that no form of remonstrance could be more effective.

That was the genial charm of essential kindness which bound men to him; and slight bonds with longer acquaintance were forged into links of steel. I doubt if any editor ever knitted together in close fellowship so select a band of sworn brothers.

Though indeed that literary sociability had been the tradition of 'Maga' since North, Tickler, and the Ettrick Shepherd held their high jinks in the blue parlour at Ambrose's. It was his business and pleasure to make his contributors acquainted with each other. He was accused, with some truth, of being neglectful of the communications of promising outsiders. He was a busy man, with lighter avocations and interests than his business concerns; and unlike his friend Delane he never studied brevity in his letters. But no one in the inner ring could make such a complaint, and he ever incited them to fresh effort by judicious encouragement. The appreciative criticism of one contributor on an article was forwarded to another; so when strangers met in Randolph Crescent or at Strath-tyrum, they came together on the footing of familiars. Not a few of my best friendships, I owe to introductions through 'Maga.' In playing his kindly rôle, Blackwood had exceptional advantages. The publisher and editor were doubled with the golfer and country gentleman: he delighted in the practice of discriminating hospitality. At Strath-tyrum he kept open house, and guests who took to their host and to each other could never wear out their welcome. An enthusiastic golfer, before golfing had become a southern craze, he had found a mansion to his mind on the Bay of St. Andrews, the storm-tossed Biscay of Eastern Scotland. The old episcopal city with

its twin colleges had attractions alike for the antiquarian, the man of letters, the golfer, and the fox-hunter. Principals Tulloch and Shairp were magnets in themselves who attracted many writers of distinction. Tulloch, with his portly figure and beaming face, a frequent contributor to the Magazine, was the best type of the enlightened and advanced Presbyterian divine. He had a large spirit of toleration, and when he filled a pulpit he filled a church. On a Sunday evening I had dined with him in Randolph Crescent, when he was preaching a series of sermons in great St. George's to overflowing congregations. To my shame be it said, when Blackwood and he threw away their cigars to go, I made excuse. Tulloch spoke no word of reproach, but somehow there was something in his wistful look that put my conscience on hot coals for the rest of the evening. I repented again when shortly afterwards I heard him of a week-day in Westminster Abbey. We had lunched at the Athenæum and he asked with hesitation whether I would care to come with him. I jumped at the offer and had no reason to regret it. He preached at Dean Stanley's request, and the face of the Dean was beaming through a discourse on breaking down middle walls of partition, which reflected his own fervid liberality.

So the visitors attracted by such men as Tulloch and Shairp always had welcome at Strathtyrum, where there was a piquant mixing of the social

elements. They met the golfers who were *habitués* of the jovial club at the headquarters of the ancient and royal game: hard-riding gentlemen who followed the Fife hounds, hunted by Anstruther Thomson, the heavy-weight, who, like Asheton Smith, had learned how to fall soft, and had made a brilliant reputation in the shires, having hunted with every pack in the islands; lights of the Parliament House; African and Indian travellers, popular novelists, soldiers and seamen. The editor loved to oscillate between town and country when St. Andrews was less accessible than now; but there was one grand advantage of the sojourns in the country—the leisure gave ample opportunity for discussion and direction. On the round of the links or the chat in the smoking-room, the author could draw on the editor's experiences, and the editor could thrash out some thorny political question or excite himself over the *primeurs* of an explorer's daring adventures. It was at Strath-tyrum that Speke wrote his Nile travels, or at least licked them into form and shape. It was there that Laurence Lockhart—it was said maliciously that when he and the editor got together business came to a standstill—secluded himself for three days to throw off the *Volunteers of Strathkineham*, founded on reminiscences of his own, and over which the editor shouted. It was there that the indefatigable Mrs. Oliphant, a frequent guest, excited her experienced host's surprise by the amount of work



she accomplished, when, like Scott at Abbotsford, she seemed to be always idling. Many other literary memories associate themselves with the house which will never see such gatherings again.

There were few things I looked forward to with greater pleasure than Blackwood's annual visit to London. He came with a breath of invigorating air from the north, and the exuberance of his quiet enjoyment was contagious. Neither painting nor photography could hit off the face when he met you; the twinkle in his eye; the wrinkles on the forehead, implying the reverse of care; the smiles that flickered round the corners of the mouth. See him sitting face to face with some valued crony like Hamley, and they reminded you of two amiable dogs, getting ready for a game at romps. Whether he had quartered himself at the Burlington Hotel or in Arlington Street, where 'Henry understood and anticipated his wants, there was often a small muster at breakfast and almost invariably at luncheon. Like the snail travelling with his house, he carried a workshop about with him, and the side-tables were strewn with books and pamphlets, proofs, and articles. Almost always there was a half-finished letter at his elbow, for he was a leisurely correspondent of the Horace Walpole school. But, like the Ettrick Shepherd, who found any excuse fair enough for a caulker, he found any excuse fair enough to throw down the pen. Some of these off-hand meetings were, as



Laidlaw said of the night with Scott and Davy, 'most superior occasions.' I remember Chesney dropping in on the first flush of the success of the *Battle of Dorking*, when publisher and author chuckled over the exchange of congratulations. And I remember the glorification over the first instalment of *Middlemarch*, and the pride with which an early copy was handed to me for the solace of a railway journey. With good reason he associated himself with the triumphs of his protégés. Few men had a keener eye for faults and beauties, when a piece of promising work was submitted to him in manuscript—for the beauties rather than the faults—and most of the affiliated were ready to acknowledge that they had profited by his shrewd counsels.

There was nothing more enjoyable than a *tête-à-tête* dinner for one versed as I was in memories of the Magazine. The famous novelists he had enlisted or floated since he took up the reins suggested endless subjects—George Eliot, Lytton, Lever, Trollope, Mrs. Oliphant, Charles Reade, Laurence Oliphant, Blackmore, and many another. Most of them had been his guests ; he had gossiped with all, and had much to say about their idiosyncrasies, their whims, and their methods of working. Nor was it only for sound business reasons that the 'Maga' of that time enveloped some of her most brilliant contributors in mystery and carefully guarded her secrets. The editor loved the

fun of listening to sage guesses or to random shots which often were woefully wide of the mark. The *Parisians* caused an exceptional sensation. So far as I know, no one attributed it to Lord Lytton, though the author of *Eugene Aram*, *Zanoni*, and *My Novel* could change his style and dress like any music hall topical singer. Many people gave it to Laurence Oliphant, from the *Piccadilly*-like social touches and the intimate knowledge of Parisian life. Blackwood would smile and say nothing.

Like all publishers or astronomers, he had the ambition of discovering new stars, and sometimes, though seldom, his foresight failed him. Although he hesitated long, he hoped great things of the author of the 'Cheveley Novels,' who, I believe, has remained anonymous. The work, like the *Comédie Humaine*, was conceived on a vast scale, and the first instalment was floated in shilling monthly parts, folio size, with illustrations. He did me the honour of consulting me about the manuscript, and my impression was, that if the author showed no little dramatic talent, the blue fire was overdone, and the beginning was pitched in too high a key to be sustained. That seemed to be the opinion of the public, and the issue came to an abrupt termination.

There was a grand parade of contributors when Mrs. Oliphant, on one of the editor's birthdays, gave a great picnic on Magna Charta Island.

The lady was then at the zenith of her popularity as a fluent and prolific novelist. Blackwood made a telling speech which surprised and fetched us all, with graceful allusions to the mistress of the revels. That bright summer day recalls some of his closest friends, with others, unavoidably absent, who were not forgotten in his speech. Then I made personal acquaintance with Blackmore. He got into the train at Clapham, appositely equipped with a superb bouquet of hot-house flowers as an offering to his hostess. Plain to simplicity in dress, and somewhat stolid of aspect, the author of *Lorna Doone* was not the man I had expected to see. I had corresponded with him before as to a critique of mine upon his semi-savage parsons of the *Maid of Sker*. I found him as unaffected in manner as in costume. We drifted into conversation, and he good-naturedly gratified my curiosity as to the Doone Valley and the wild traditions of Exmoor. Then I could understand the inception and finished execution of that masterpiece of romantic realism. The gifts of imagination had not tempted the writer to dispense with the most conscientious study of scenes and authorities.

Chesney had come down from the college on Cooper's Hill, and Hamley was there from the Staff College. No more notable representatives could have been found of the succession of soldier contributors who have been recruited for 'Maga' since the day of O'Dogherty down to the campaigning in

South Africa and the Far East. Chesney never did anything by halves, though his interests were divided between arms and letters. In India he had spared neither toil nor trouble, and he always felt that his services as military secretary had been ignored or indifferently acknowledged, when he devoted his study to the scientific fortification of the North-Western Frontier. It was a case, as he considered, of a superior carrying off the honours. Chesney ran some brilliant novels through the Magazine, but, like many a novelist, he put his best work in his first. I know nothing more vividly descriptive of events of the Mutiny than the chapters on the siege in *The Dilemma*. As he told me, they were dashed off at red-hot speed.

Of Hamley I speak with greater diffidence, for our close friendship may suggest doubts as to my impartiality. If his enmities were lasting, his friendships were deeper and as enduring; he grappled his intimates to him with hooks of steel; and the more intimately he was known, the more you admired the range of his powers and the readiness of his humour. To borrow an observation of Johnson on himself, it took a long time to travel over Hamley's mind. He was of more martial figure and sterner aspect than Chesney. In repose the face was stern, but when the heart was touched or the humour tickled, it would break into the smiles which seemed so natural to all who knew him. At that time the gallant chief of the Staff

College, the brilliant writer of poetry and fiction, of essays and war literature of European authority, was not under the shadow of a wrong which was never to be righted. No one admired him more than Chesney. A strong partisan but a capable judge, he declared that Hamley's treatment had been 'abominable—abominable!' If the *Battle of Dorking* carried Chesney to fame on a springtide of ephemeral popularity, I should say that 'Shakespeare's Funeral' was Hamley's masterpiece, and as the theme was an Immortal, the charm is perennial. It gives the measure of the man's rare fancy and inspiration, for it shows he had much of Shakespeare's undefinable power of identifying himself with the most varied human types, of thinking their thoughts and speaking with their voices. He shone in the short story, sparkling with drollery. He only wrote a single novel, but the lightness of touch in *Lady Lees's Widowhood* made me often implore him for another of the same. He rather rose to the suggestion, but unfortunately it never took shape.

Though habitually abstemious, he was a connoisseur in cookery; he liked a good dinner and detested indifferent wine. His cook at the Staff College was a *cordon bleu*, and he paid her high wages. One of the most lively dinners I remember was when I met him by appointment one Christmas—of all days in the year—at the Athæneum, to pronounce on some canvas-back ducks,



sent him by an American friend. By the way, the refrigerated ducks were a failure as usual, but that signified nothing, for there was store of Christmas cheer in the deserted dining-room. The only other diner was Herbert Spencer. The ducks suggested America; Hamley, in his youth, had served in Canada, and the philosopher, prompted by him, came out in a fashion that astounded us. He donned the dress of a *Noel Guisard* and went in for high jinks and drolleries. It was a novelty to hear Transatlantic manners, Red Indian customs, and the very habits of amorous Indian dogs discussed with the profundity of omniscience and the rollicking fun of a Toole. But Hamley had the rare endowment of dignified familiarity and the knack of 'drawing' the reserved with an off-hand manner which never offended. As he would never have tolerated a shade of impertinence himself, so no one could have suspected him of intending a liberty. If he chaffed a learned professor or a grave divine over the club billiard table, they seemed flattered rather than otherwise; possibly they were somewhat in dread of the sarcastic sting. The sting might be there, but he never stung in malice. He had the artist's pride in his literary work, and there never was a more conscientious workman. When Scott was pressing Canning for a *Quarterly* article, he begged him to 'break the neck of it' by dining on a boiled chicken. That was Hamley's way. When pulling



himself together for an effort, he put the muzzle on, and then like Chesney he wrote at a white heat. He wrote from a well-stored mind, for he was always reading and reflecting. When the very legible manuscript was despatched, his thoughts were still with it, and even Kinglake scarcely gave more trouble to publishers and printers. If he worried others, he never spared himself. With some hesitation, and tempted perhaps by the £200, he had arranged with Messrs. Seeley for a book on the Crimean War. Doubtless the proposal was suggested by the admirable volume on the Sebastopol campaign, reprinted from Blackwood. The rough and unstudied letters from the camp, penned in the worst hardships of the winter investment, had been reprinted *verbatim*. Yet fifty years later they read as freshly as ever, and the facts had never been disputed. Drawing freely on his former work, the task he had undertaken would have been light. Preoccupied by his parliamentary duties, he hesitated. Friends advised that he might do so honourably, for the 'Letters' were still authoritative and inimitably graphic and picturesque. But in his high conception of duty he put it aside. Each line of the later volume was rewritten. In a letter to me, Sir Archibald Alison pronounced it 'the most charming and able book that Hamley ever wrote . . . with all the breadth and justice of his deep military thought.'

Among all the guests at Magna Charta Island,

perhaps no one would have been more missed by the editor than Laurence Lockhart. He was one of the two 'Lauries' who were house-pets, the other being Laurence Oliphant. Lockhart in his younger days was the incarnation of exuberant spirits and the delight of his jovial Highland regiment. But those who had known him long and well, loved and admired him most when he rose superior to heavy trouble, and was carrying a load of ill-health with placid heroism and cheerful resignation. I have been with him when he went for 'the cure,' which never cured him, to Schwalbach and Kissingen; I have listened from the next room to the hacking cough that followed a broken night, and seen him at the springs and the breakfast table apparently in the brightest spirits. There never was a more buoyant or sunny temperament—in that he much resembled his brother, Sir William, Commander-in-Chief in India—and those high spirits of his overflowed in his maiden novel, *Doubles and Quits*. The zest for fun, translated into dramatic performance, had sometimes landed him in awkward situations. He could get himself up to play a part like a Monsieur Lecocq or a Sherlock Holmes. His most perilous escapade was at Gibraltar, when the ensign, dressed as an admiral, called on the commandant and was embarrassed by an invitation to dinner. He frequently figured as an old general at London dinners, growling with a gruff voice over a

starched necktie; and as a successful impostor must have a clever confederate, the confederate was Lady Charlotte Locker, the sister-in-law of Dean Stanley, and the first wife of Locker Lampson. Lockhart had a profound belief in Blackwood's literary judgment, but much mistrusted his love of humour and his predilection for a joyous companion. 'Blackwood likes anything that makes him laugh,' he used to say, but he did not care to be admired in the rôle of the mountebank. He rose nearer to his aspirations in *Fair to See*; and in *Mine is Thine* he could honestly congratulate himself on having 'fetched them,' as he confided to me one day in the gardens at Baden. The latter novel may have owed something of inspiration to having been penned on the very table at Ashestiel on which Scott had written *Waverley*. By the way, I have sometimes wondered whether I did not make a fatal mistake in not buying No. 39 Castle Street, as I had the chance of doing, when I went back to Edinburgh from continental wanderings to walk the Parliament House. Fancy sitting down to write in the sanctum of the wizard, looking out on the very back-garden where Camp had been laid to rest! But then I had never dreamed of turning my thoughts to scribbling, and in the magician's glorious career there were no omens of success at the Bar.

## CHAPTER XII

### FRIENDS OF THE ATHENÆUM

THE Athenæum is a mausoleum of memories; a place haunted by the phantoms of good friends or bright acquaintances who have flitted away. It echoes with the familiar voices; you see the spectres of the past in their familiar seats. Among those memories the club brings to my mind the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews*. With the death of Henry Reeve a portly figure disappeared. A martyr to gout, latterly he moved with measured steps, and the silver-headed stick was ever at his hand, even when presiding at his own dinner table. His was a noticeable face and not to be passed unregarded. The eye, with a dash of the disdainful, the full mouth and somewhat heavy jaw, all indicated character and determination. He was a strong man who loved his own way, and for the most part he had succeeded in getting it. When he took a liking, he was eminently companionable. Gout is no emollient of the temper, and when you drop in upon an elderly gentleman with a leg swathed in flannels, you are ready to make allowances. But some of the pleasantest hours of literary and political converse I have

passed have been in calling upon Reeve when his enemy had laid him by the heels. He welcomed fresh breaths from the outer world; and he was one of the few literary editors who from the catholicity of his likings kept himself abreast of all the literature of the latest hour. His surroundings were in keeping, for the collections in his well-stored libraries were miscellaneous, and the volumes were handsomely bound. He did not, like the famous bibliomaniac Heber, buy in duplicate or triplicate, and his sorrow was that his books were divided. Half were in London, the other half in his Hampshire home at Christchurch. He did his best by separating them in some sort of classification, and the admirable collection of French memoirs was set aside for lighter reading in the country. No one had a shrewder *flair* in new books, or a surer instinct in pronouncing off-hand judgment. In him the Longmans lost an adviser on whom they absolutely relied. It was not only that in a few pregnant lines he could indicate the merits and shortcomings of a manuscript, but he would say shrewdly whether the book was likely to sell and how far it would hit off the taste of the hour. Arranging with his contributors, his ordinary rule was to ask if they had reviewed the book elsewhere. He feared repetitions, and hated *réchauffés*. Nevertheless, in special cases, he would stretch a point, and he grudged what he considered a clever article, when it had gone astray and he had missed



his chance by over-punctiliousness. Most editors worth their salt are on the search for rising talent. Reeve was platonically on the watch, simply because he was charmed by a book of talent, and rejoiced in the promise of the writer's future.

Reeve died an octogenarian, in full intellectual vigour. Almost to the last he had written the political articles in his *Review*. In fact, foreign politics were his favourite study, and he had always been in closest touch with leading French and German Liberals. Cradled in literature he had been launched in politics as a lad. He sprung from an East Anglian literary stock, when Norwich was a centre of letters. He was sent abroad in his teens, with introductions from his aunt, Mrs. Austin, the second of the 'Three generations of Englishwomen.' He spoke French like a native, and wrote German so fluently and correctly, that for years he was a regular contributor to Prussian and Bavarian periodicals. Barely of age, he had been enlisted on the staff of the *Times*, and he has told me how very many thousands of pounds he had been paid for his labours. For forty years he had been autocrat of the *Edinburgh*; but on accepting the appointment he had made it a stipulation that his connection with the *Times* should not determine. As editor of the great Whig organ and historical quarterly, he had exceptional qualifications, and not the least were his foreign connections. Cosmopolitan as he



was, his sympathies were French, and before the fall of the Empire he was *ami de la maison* at the Embassy in Albert Gate. Not that he was by any means a partisan of the Emperor. St. Hilaire, Thiers, Guizot, Victor Cousin, De Rémusat, and De Broglie were among his habitual correspondents. Yet he never permitted the most intimate relations to influence his conduct ; and there is a letter from Mrs. Austin to M. St. Hilaire, deprecating his unbridled indignation at an article by Reeve himself on the Suez Canal. For as to that Reeve agreed with Lord Palmerston, foreboding disastrous consequences to England. He was in constant intercourse with the Orleans princes, especially with the Duc d'Aumale, who had submitted to him the *Memoirs of the Condés* for revision. The last of his many crossings of the Channel was on a visit to the Duke at Chantilly. He lunched often at the Athenæum, almost always in the upper corner, between fire and window, and invariably on a Sunday after service in the Temple. Then after a descent to the smoking-room, he would start on what he called his *giro*, a round of afternoon calls. Walking with Reeve up St. James's Street was like riding with Delane in Rotten Row. It was a perpetual lifting of the hat or waving of the hand.

As Registrar of the Privy Council, he was in touch with Cabinet ministers, from whom, when the Liberals were in power, he was in the way of

obtaining early if not exclusive information. His friend Greville, the 'Gruncher,' Clerk of the Council, had paid him the handsome and lucrative compliment of bequeathing him the *Memoirs* in manuscript with *carte blanche* as to the editing. The legacy, though financially profitable, was perhaps prejudicial to his official career. The publication of the memoirs relating to the reign of Queen Victoria, with their unreserved frankness and frequent revelations, naturally gave rise to heated discussions. They had the honour of a debate in the Commons, when the late Sir William Fraser, something of a snarler like the 'Gruncher' himself, was epigrammatically severe. I remember talking them over with Lord Houghton and with Delane. Lord Houghton thought that Reeve had done the delicate work with creditable discretion and tact. Delane said that if two or three pages had been cancelled there was nothing to which fair exception could be taken. I fancy Reeve cared little for unfriendly criticism. He had confidence in his own judgment, and was persuaded, moreover, that excessive suppression and mutilation would have been a betrayal of his trust.

Dr. William Smith, the editor of the *Quarterly*, was, when I knew him, a benignant-looking old gentleman, albeit with something of a leonine aspect. Nevertheless there was much shrewdness in the face, and when he fixed you with his smiling eyes they searched you. 'The old doctor,' that

was his familiar appellation in Albemarle Street, was very regular in his habits. The mornings were passed in his library in Westbourne Terrace, a spacious and luxurious apartment, with three lofty windows looking out on the little back-garden. In the north-western corner was his writing-table, with its handsome appointments. Each yard of the walls was padded with volumes in rich or severe bindings. Like Reeve or Lord Houghton at Fryston, his selections seemed to have been made from what was readable rather than abstruse. The room would have been a paradise for the omnivorous reader with *carte blanche* to range the shelves at will. Dr. Smith had as many irons in the fire as most folk, and was necessarily a busy man with a large correspondence. Yet it struck one pleasantly that he never objected to being interrupted, and he was certainly always ready to talk, especially when it was a question of some article that interested him. In those days there was more actual reviewing of individual books, and the editor was liberal in sending the contributor any volumes that bore upon the subject. In the afternoon his carriage was always to be seen drawn up before the door of No. 50; and so many standard works that he had edited were so constantly passing through the press, that he invariably found something to occupy him. When he left Albemarle Street, he was set down at the Athenæum. He paid the penalty of advanced age,

and latterly was much of an invalid. To the last, his cheerfulness never failed. Folkestone was a favourite resort of his as of mine, and many an instructive chat I have had with him as I walked alongside of his bathchair on the Lees. In his more active days he had known the neighbourhood well, and he was the most learned and intelligent of all directors to anything that was worth seeing within walking or driving reach. It was at Folkestone that he was surprised by the announcement that Lord Salisbury had recommended him for a knighthood. Had he been consulted beforehand, he would have declined; as it was he hesitated, but it was delicate and invidious to back out. So he accepted the honour and died Sir William.

Albemarle Street had sustained a greater loss in the previous year by the death of John Murray, the second of the dynasty. No one would have suspected a few weeks before that the end was near. Seemingly in full vigour of his faculties, that death broke the last link with the golden age of our literature in the first half of the nineteenth century. Murray's memories went back to Byron and Scott, Campbell, Crabbe, Coleridge, and Southey, who had all been his father's familiars. As a youth he had himself been a guest at Abbotsford, when he impressed his host as a singularly favourable specimen of English education. Three remarkable events he remembered in especial. He

had been present at the burning of the Byron manuscripts in the Albemarle dining-room, by which, as Scott observes in his *Journal*, Tom Moore lost £2000, through generous but somewhat misplaced susceptibility. Gifford and Lord John Russell had pronounced them 'in parts too gross for publication'; for Byron, as Scott expressed it, 'embellished his amours and was *le fanfaron de vices qu'il n'avait pas*.' As Murray said, the manuscripts might have been expurgated and the treasure preserved. Again, looking over the balustrades, he had seen the two lame poets—Byron and Scott—going down the stairs in close confabulation. And by a happy chance he had been present at the memorable theatrical banquet in the Waterloo Rooms in Edinburgh, when Scott confessed to the authorship of the novels. In a letter to his father he had given Scott's speech, almost *verbatim*, from memory. In the letter he records a literally dramatic incident. Scott had proposed the health of Mackay, who had played so inimitably the part of the Bailie. By the way, if I may be forgiven the digression, I have seen the veteran both in the Bailie and in Peter Peebles, and the latter rôle, with its grim but homely humour, struck me as the more masterly interpretation of the two. You shook with laughter through the scenes, and yet were suddenly sobered and saddened by the grotesque pathos, when Peter comes down from glorying in 'the height of earthly



grandeur,' as the hero of 'a gangin' plea,' to sighing over the missing the daily meal which came so regularly when he was a decent burgess; and never was more humour thrown into a single sentence, than when he ejaculated to the Quaker, 'The Lord mend your eyesight, neighbour, that disna ken grey hairs frae a tow wig.' But the mention of Mackay has carried me across from the Waterloo Rooms to the Theatre Royal, which used to confront them on what is now the site of the Post Office. The actor's health had been duly honoured, when there came a voice from the other end of the hall, 'Ma conscience, if my father the Bailie' (a slip for Deacon) 'had been alive to hear that my health had been proposed by the author of *Waverley*!'

The standard works published by Murray are not to be numbered. To name a few of the authors, there were, Hallam, Lord Stanhope, Layard, Lord Campbell, Livingstone, Schliemann, Darwin, Dean Stanley, Smiles, Dean Milman, and Sir Henry Maine. We are indebted to him for the *Speaker's Commentary* and Sir William Smith's Dictionaries and volumes of reference. He had inherited the traditional liberality of the house. Once, under pecuniary pressure and against his advice, an author parted with the copyright of a manuscript for £600. As the publisher had foreseen, the book had a sensational success, and the sale realised over £3000. The author received a further cheque for £2000. Like



John Blackwood, Murray was seen at his best when presiding at his own table, and drawn on insensibly to indulge in recollections suggested by the *genius loci*. The portraits of the dead on the walls were still speaking—the once famous African travellers, Denham, Clapperton, and Lander, with Basil Hall, Barrow of the Admiralty, who aided Croker in editing the *Quarterly* after Gifford's death, and who caused Scott some anxiety by objecting to Lockhart's succession. Last but not the least was Lavengro, whose adventures had been in England, Ireland, Spain, and wild Wales. If the men of action were in evidence below stairs, poetry and romance were in the atmosphere of the drawing-room. For there the host would bring forth the cherished manuscripts of *Childe Harold* and the minor poems, with others that had come from Ashestiel or Abbotsford.

The portraits in the Albemarle dining-room suggest the African travellers I have met at the Athenæum. Sir Richard Burton was a man who must have fixed attention anywhere. I think his wife says in her biography that some people called his expression diabolical. Though I did not, like her, fall in love with him at first sight, it never struck me in that way. It was severe, stern, saturnine if you like, but not in the slightest degree repulsive. On the contrary, in animated conversation it brightened up, and the smile when he put you straight on some vexed geographical point was winning

and almost sweet. Before I met him in the flesh, I had remarked to Lord Houghton that the gratuitous aggressiveness of his books rubbed me up the wrong way. Lord Houghton, who was fond of fighting his own battles, said, 'If the man is in the right, why should he not be aggressive?' And undoubtedly Burton, like Sir Charles Napier, was a man of strong will and stronger animosities; he never could get on smoothly either with rivals or superiors. He won me to share his resentment to the full, at his not having been named Consul-General in Morocco in succession to Drummond Hay, for no man seemed better fitted for such a post. Since his *Biography* was written by the wife who adored him, I have reconsidered that opinion. But when there was nothing to irritate and you only sought to learn, he would roar you as softly as any sucking dove. At the club he lunched alone, and generally with a book before him. When he dived to the smoking-room for coffee and cigar, then came your opportunity. Then he would talk unreservedly enough about the lands he had visited and the perils he had escaped. Then he would discuss the devious wanderings of the Israelites in the desert, expatiate on the treasures of the mines of Midian which he had been sent to prospect, or revert to his stormy consulate at Damascus, when there were troubles in 'the Mountain,' and he was generally in hot water.

There was one delicate subject I never ventured

to approach, and that was Central Africa and the Nile Sources. I had heard too much about it from Colonel Grant, who was the devoted friend of Speke, and necessarily the bitter aversion of Burton. Indeed, there was no love lost between them. Grant I knew intimately, and the more he was known the better he was liked. With his tall, muscular figure—*découplé*, as the French phrase it—he looked the athlete for the ‘walk across Africa.’ With that commanding form and pleasant but determined face, he was the very man to smooth his way among savages without falling back on firearms. After all he had accomplished, there was no blood-guiltiness on his conscience. When he had married a lady of fortune and taken up house in Grosvenor Street, he was the most hospitable of entertainers, and gathered hosts of congenial friends around him. Naturally he took a deep interest in the Geographical Society, and was a regular attendant at the dinners, to which he generally invited a guest. The most kindly of men and absolutely trustworthy, you should have given implicit credence to anything he said. Yet I confess I have been staggered by circumstantial stories, relative to Burton’s relations with Speke, and though I have had them confirmed subsequently on independent authority, I hesitate still to do more than hint at them. The traveller was interested in other things than the problem of the Nile Sources. Little as you might know

of botany, nothing was more agreeable than to be taken into his back drawing-room and den to turn over the portfolios of Central African flora, with running commentaries on the circumstances in which the plants had been gathered.

One day, stopping to speak to Grant at his luncheon-table in the club, he introduced me to a sun-burned, sun-dried, careworn man, sitting opposite him. Unfortunately I did not catch the name, and after some casual remark passed on, though Grant in his cordial way asked me to join them. Only afterwards I learned to my regret that it was Stanley, just returned from his melancholy march for the relief of Emin Pasha. So I had but a single glimpse of another Pasha—Sir Samuel Baker—standing on the steps of Shepherd's Hotel at Cairo, the African explorer whose fascinating literary style has always given his books an exceptional charm for me. Cairo was then full of notorieties, for the gaieties at the opening of the Suez Canal were in full swing, and most of the visitors paid some attention to the toilet. Baker was got up in rough tweeds and knickerbockers, as if he were turning out for a day's shooting. I was hurrying off to catch a train, and had scarcely time to take a second look. So I had but a vague impression of the broad chest and massive build which he declared to be of inestimable value to the explorer, when he knocked the ringleader of the mutineers out of time in the

scrimmage at the start from Khartoum for the Nile fountains.

I dined with Professor Palmer at the Athenæum on the eve of his leaving for Arabia on the mysterious missions which have never been altogether explained. I owed that pleasure to his intimacy with Chenery, for their common interest in oriental studies drew them closely together. As to the objects of these missions, he was naturally reserved. It was understood that the first and chief one was to treat with the desert sheiks and assure the Suez Canal from their raiding when Arabi had raised the standard of revolt. On landing at Port Said Palmer changed his costume, and was riding through the Sinaitic Peninsula in Syrian robes, lavishing magnificent gifts. That first mission was so successful, that arriving at Suez, he persuaded the Admiral and Lord Northbrook that with £20,000 at his disposal he could easily raise 50,000 Bedouins. He set off again, with £3000 in gold in his saddlebags, professedly to purchase camels: rather, perhaps, for the confidential interview with the leading chiefs, for which he had prearranged. On the way to that meeting he was ambushed and murdered.

Palmer, with his placid face, his keen, bright eyes and soft-flowing beard, was admirably fitted to assume the disguise of the Bedouin, with whose habits and speech he was familiar. He was sanguine as to results, and would probably have



succeeded, but for an intervention which no Englishman could possibly have foreseen. I should be loath to give credence to that sinister rumour, had it not been confirmed to me by a keen-witted editor, the reverse of credulous, on evidence he accepted as absolutely truthful. It was said that a countryman closely *lié* with some of the Arab chiefs had warned them of the envoy's second journey and its objects, intimating besides that his camels would be weighted with gold. But no shadow of the impending tragedy rested upon Palmer that night. His spirits rose high over the excitement of the journey; the talk was rather retrospective than regardful of the future; and I sat in silence, listening to the animated conversation, enriched by stores of recondite learning. Then the old friends shook hands and parted for the last time.

Were I to launch out on personal recollections of the Athenæum it would be endless. I must content myself with random allusions to some men who specially won my affection or admiration. I see them now as they lived and moved. Going far back, there is Lord Colonsay, President of the Court of Session and Lord Justice-General, who proposed me for the club. With his sage aspect, broad forehead, and the shaggy grey eyelashes thatching the hanging eaves of the eyebrows, you might have said of him, as was said of Lord Thurlow, that no man could possibly be so wise



as he looked ; yet you would have been wrong. When he came south, he left behind him in Scotland an unrivalled reputation as a civil and criminal judge, and his judgments carried great weight in Scottish cases in the Lords. With young beginners in the law he was most affable and condescending, and the dignified old man wasted much good advice on me when I passed at the Scottish Bar. His habits were simple, and his fare was Spartan. I often dined with him *tête-à-tête* at the Carlton, when he generally contented himself with a couple of mutton chops. He had much to say about the politicians he saw sitting at other tables ; but he was a genuine Highlander, and never so happy as when you got him away to the Western Isles and his picturesque home on lonely Colonsay. And that was the case with his brother, Sir John. One winter Sir John came to see us, when we had apartments in the Villa Rupe at Sorrento. A voracious reader, he was full of Greg's *Political Problems*, which he had been studying in the carriage from Castellamare. I have the volume now, with his autograph on the title-page. From English politics I changed the subject to Central Asia and Persia, hoping to get some lights on those countries from the Englishman, who perhaps knew them best. He talked with great animation on the subject, deploring the ascendancy of Russia in the Court of the Shah. As on one of the few bright days in a Sorrento winter we were climbing the hill crowned by the Deserta,

when turning, he saw Capri floating in a sunny haze at its moorings off the mouth of the Bay, of all places in the world it reminded him of surf-beaten Colonsay. I forget whether it was before that or afterwards that he bought the island from his brother.

There could be no stronger contrast to Lord Colonsay than Lord Morris, ex-Chief-Justice of Ireland and a more recent acquaintance. Morris shone, sparkled, and bubbled over with Irish humour in the society that Lord Colonsay shunned. I fancy he prided himself on the rich Irish brogue which gave piquancy to his ready repartees and excellent stories. He was equally at home with all sorts and conditions of men, and dealt with criminals in as summary a manner as Lord Bramwell, but with a geniality which for the moment almost reconciled them to their fate. On the Bench and in the Senate common sense predominated. He had a strong sympathy with the erratic statesmanship of Lord Randolph Churchill and a great admiration for the man. He used to quote with a chuckle Lord Randolph's illustration of the absurdities of the extremists who advocated women's rights. It was the story of a well-known champion of feminine claims who got into an omnibus, found all the seats occupied, and stood scowling at the man in front of her. 'I believe you are Mrs. So-and-So,' he quietly remarked, 'and go in for the rights of women.' 'I do,' the lady said uncom-

promisingly, and the response came sharp, 'Well, stand up for them, then.' That was characteristic of his humour, as well as of his strong native sense. So he had a natural antipathy to the statesmen who stood on their dignity and would not unbend. He could never have ranked among the obsequious followers of the elder or younger Pitt. He had a high regard for a noble politician who had made a firm stand against Home Rule, and had drawn a large following after him, when Chamberlain was making sure of the Midlands. Yet, as he said, that nobleman was never cut out for a premier in a democratic country, and a reminiscence of his own served as proof. He was walking homewards from the House of Lords late one evening with a well-known peer, a staunch Liberal Unionist, when his friend said, 'There's —— ahead of us, let us go on and join him.' 'Better not,' said Morris; but his companion would not be bidden, and hurried forward. In a couple of minutes he came back; metaphorically with his tail between his legs; the great grandee had hardly deigned to answer him. 'Can you wonder,' said Morris, 'that he never was premier, nor ever will be!' For himself, though he had a strong backbone there was no starch about him; he could drop his judicial dignity, and accommodate himself to his surroundings. He was as popular at his wild home of Spidal as in the London clubs or at the Castle, where his chaff of the lady of a Liberal Lord Lieutenant is still

remembered; and his influence won the seat at Galway for his son, when no other Conservative had a chance outside of Ulster or Dublin. Another Irishman of something the same type and much the same convictions was Sir William Gregory, who was likewise a Galway landlord, yet never lost his popularity. I made his acquaintance on board the *Delta*, when we were on our way to the opening of the Suez Canal. Among the other passengers were Lord Houghton, the Hon. Tom Bruce, Hawkshaw, and Bateman, the engineers, Simpson of the *Illustrated News*, and many another. But no one of them was more agreeable or more instructive than Gregory, with the manifold recollections of a wide knowledge of the world. He won golden opinions as Governor of Ceylon, and left a sad blank when we lost him at the Athenæum.

Many a literary man owes a debt of gratitude to Sir Richard Quain. He may be said to have constituted himself physician-in-ordinary to the literary guild. But there were two objections to turning to him in your troubles. The first was that he would take no fee, which made you shy of looking him up in Harley Street. The second, that when you did go, he was so interested in current events, that he would talk about anything rather than the object of your visit. Sometimes, *en revanche*, he sent you away brightened up, for his buoyant temperament was contagious. A

great crony of Delane's, he was specially concerned about the leaders of the *Times* and the men who wrote them. There was no possibility of mistaking his nationality ; like Morris and Gregory he hailed from West Ireland. But in him the brogue had toned down into a mere souvenir of his native Mallow, which, like his brother the judge, he held in fond affection. I had come back from making an Irish tour as *Times* commissioner, and my regret was that I had not interviewed him as to Mallow before starting, he had so much to say of the romantic little town and its singularly picturesque environs. Quain was a sportsman and emphatically a cosmopolitan. He loved to take his holidays in the Hungarian plains or the Carpathians, and many a boar's head and *hure* came to his table from the Magyar friends who had entertained him in their castles. A busy man, he was seldom to be seen in the Athenæum, and then the carriage would draw up at the door, and he would drop in late. You would be roused with a touch to find him perching on the elbow of your chair, eager as any citizen of old Athens to hear or to tell any new thing. If he had another fault as a physician, it was that in the flow of anecdote he was inclined to be indiscreet as to the celebrated patients who had consulted him. When years had gone by, he was not over-scrupulous as to the incognita which anonymous princes and veiled queens had jealously sought to guard. If he came



seldom to the Athenæum, he knew the wines of the cellars better than any one. At a dinner of strangers there, he was sitting next to me, and when the claret was circulating he turned to me to recommend a special tap of port. It was a vintage which by a whisper to the butler, without consulting the host, he had summoned from the vasty deep, and then recommended to the general attention of the company. When the Lafitte had not a chance. As a notable *bon vivant*, his practice clashed with his preaching. I consulted him once, and he imperatively ordered a strict *régime* for a week or so; then as I was leaving the room he asked off-hand, 'Are you going to the *Saturday Review* dinner to-morrow at Greenwich?' 'How can I,' I answered ruefully, 'after your absurd orders?' 'Oh, never you mind; go all the same, and sit opposite to me; I'll raise my finger to my lips if there is anything specially unwholesome.' And that at a banquet where there was everything rich and indigestible, from the calipash and calipee to the dressed crab and the camembert. How manfully he faced the painful disease which killed him, I know well, for I was sometimes admitted to his sick-chamber. There was always the same cordial welcome; always the same cheery alertness as to the things which were passing in the outer world, with a touching resignation to the end he foresaw, and which speedily came as a relief.

A man I regretted much was Sir Frederick



Pollock. Member of a distinguished and brilliantly successful family, famous alike in law, literature, and arms, he inherited the talent and the *bonhomie* of his race. Once a week there was a day when he used to lunch regularly at the Athenæum, before attending the Board of an Insurance Company. As a friend of his son, then editing the *Saturday Review*, I seldom missed one of these weekly meetings; indeed the temptation to come to town was irresistible. The courtly Queen's Remembrancer had an endless store of reminiscences; he published them afterwards in a lively little volume. His gentle manner and deliberation of speech made the story or the *bon mot* all the more telling. Sir Frederick had a slight stoop, but his brother, Sir Richard—known in the family as 'Uncle Trim'—carried himself like a soldier and straight as a lance, seemed the incarnation of evergreen activity. Though he seldom volunteered anything as to his own services as soldier and political resident in the North Western Provinces, he was an invaluable source of information as to comrades and illustrious contemporaries of the fighting days when the frontier of the Indus seemed trembling in our fingers. I was greatly indebted to talks with him when writing the biography of John Jacob of Jacobabad; and his sudden and unexpected death came as a startling shock.

Frederick Locker Lampson used to remind me of Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, as Scott describes

him. A fastidious dilettante, delighting in the society of men of letters, he prowled about the purlieus of literature, occasionally hazarding an inbreak. In poetry Praed was his model; and he was a charming writer of society verse, polishing with infinite care. Hamley, with whom he was on the closest terms of friendship, always in correspondence addressed him as 'My dear poet,' with, possibly, a faint touch of irony. And he used sincerely to condole with Locker in his provincial exiles, when in later years he had a charming country seat in Sussex, and had built himself a commodious mansion on the wind-blown cliffs of Cromer. The keen north wind touched a sensitive liver, and the country had few attractions for a man who delighted in intellectual company, in book shops, print shops, and repositories of curios. When in town, Locker was a regular attendant at the midnight meetings of the Cosmopolitan, and took no little trouble in beating up for eligible members. And he prided himself, with excellent reason, on having filled for many years the honorary office of treasurer to the Literary Society, perhaps the most select fellowship in England. The members, like the French Academicians, are limited to forty, and a single black ball excludes. On the lists are the names of archbishops and lords chancellors, statesmen, diplomatists, famous travellers, and many of the immortals in letters and the arts. In fact, they are rolls of fame and

of all that has been most distinguished since the first year of the last century.

I felt exceptional regret for the death of Sir Frederick Bramwell as a near and hospitable neighbour in the Kentish Weald. His was a rarely versatile intellect, and to the last he showed his irrepressible vitality. A great man of science, and in incessant and lucrative employment as a practical engineer, his other interests were manifold. His brother, the Baron, is said to have said of him, 'He knows as much law as myself and all other things.' He was a voracious and miscellaneous reader; no one was better versed in the best contemporary fiction. He was deeply concerned in all the scientific inventions which could be turned to popular and profitable account. His services and great authority were constantly retained on arbitrations and commissions of inquiry. He was constantly putting in an appearance at scientific gatherings in the provinces, from the British Association downwards. I have often seen him sitting crumpled up of a bitter morning on the platform of his railway station, and read on the following morning a brilliant speech delivered at Leeds or Liverpool. But he never bored the uninitiated with transcendental talk; he had a playful humour and a happy wit. One day he professed to grumble at the charming country place of which he was both fond and proud, as being down in a hollow amid damp meadows. I remarked that

he was fortunately situated in a most picturesque and interesting neighbourhood. 'So your idea of happiness,' he retorted, 'is a place from which you are always glad to get away.' In an obituary notice in a New Jersey journal, his great friend, Monsignor Doane, told a characteristic story of a speech of Sir Frederick's at a scientific dinner at Cambridge. It was very late when he got upon his legs, and he said the only thing that occurred to him in connection with applied science at that hour, was the striking of a lucifer match and applying it to a bedroom candle.

## CHAPTER XIII

### RAMBLES WITH ROD AND GUN

No recollections are more pleasant or more varied than those associated with the rod or the gun. They carry you back into all manner of scenes, from the forest and the moor to the fields and the coverts, from the birch-fringed Highland loch to the breezy down, the swamp, and the seashore. Moreover, they lead you into strange countries, among men of rude manners and unfamiliar speech. Wonderfully fresh they are too, and the fresher the further you go back, at least so I find them. I conjure up the spot where I shattered the head of my first rabbit, with a heavy double-barrel I could hardly bring to my shoulder, as he sat under a spruce bough. It was not much of a performance, for the range was little over a couple of yards, but the thrill of sanguinary satisfaction that ran through the veins surpassed that when I whipped the first trout out of the burn with a worm on a string and a hazel rod. Boys are neither bloodthirsty nor deliberately cruel, but, when healthy and country-bred, they take naturally to sport as the young spaniel or terrier. And in spite of all the sentimentalist or humanitarian can say, it is a law of

beneficent nature that the passion should grow on them. As I have said somewhere else, the man with the gun is the friend of the weak and the protector of the helpless. But *qui s'excuse s'accuse*, and it is idle arguing a case which has long since been satisfactorily settled by experience, conscience, and common sense. The first rabbit and the first trout were followed in due course by other moments of rapture and hours or minutes of intense excitement. The first sight of the distant deer in his native wilds—not as I had seen them before, from the top of a stage coach, deliberately crossing the road in advance, conscious apparently that they were out of season and safe. The first mad rush of the first salmon; the fall of the first woodcock in the coppice, when I snapped at him, haphazard, through the boughs of an oak tree; the dropping of the first snipe after a multitude of discreditable misses, etc. etc.

Looking back upon changes in the country and the revolution in shooting methods, the *laudator temporis acti* makes melancholy moan. Shooting is far less of a sport and much more of a business associated with social functions. I am inclined to agree with old Donald, Frederick St. John's keeper and constant companion, that agricultural advance and the progress of reclamation have been playing sad havoc with everything. I see oat crops waving now over the snipe bogs, which one could only tread at peril of immersion to the armpits. Fields



on the home farm have been drained, where you were sure to find any number of hares squatting under the tufts of rushes. Though to be sure that scarcity is very much owing to the late Sir William Harcourt's exterminating Act, passed just at the moment when tenants were dictating terms to the landlords. Even on tolerably well-watched estates there used to be but a rough kind of preserving, and the rheumatic old head keeper would never dream of leaving the blankets to keep a chilly outlook for possible poachers. Indeed, unless he had set his snares for hares or rabbits, there was little to tempt the poacher to nocturnal raids. Then the youth could walk the woods through the shooting season, seeking anything that offered a shot from rabbit or weasel to hawk or wood-pigeon. Now the home coverts, with carefully tended undergrowth, perhaps with dummy birds on the branches and bell-wires stretched over the ground, are strictly tabooed. The protected haunts of the hand-fed pheasant are held over for two or three big shoots; and even if you are privileged to join in the fun, such as it is, it is concentrated and comparatively tame.

When Colonel Hawker travelled down to Scotland, on his several shooting trips, he seems to have lighted from the coach where he pleased, put his gun together and gone out trying his luck. When St. John, many years later, kept house at Invererne and elsewhere in Moray, he tramped the

surrounding country for days, for anything from deer and ptarmigan down to duck and snipe. His wanderings included those famous moors of The Mackintosh, which now, with the system of scientific driving and strategical butts, are rich in record bags. I never was privileged to take such roving liberties, and those prehistoric experiences were before my time. But I remember that when out with the gun, we were nowhere over particular about marches, and trespassers, after brief and benevolent expostulation, often arranged to club for luncheon with the aggrieved.

But I do remember the startling boom, when Scottish landowners realised the value of sporting property. It was the railway which in the first place brought it about. When the Southerner had to travel north by 'Defiance' or Royal Mail, Lochaber or Badenoch, to say nothing of Sutherland or the Ord of Caithness, lay altogether beyond the ordinary experiences of Piccadilly or Pall Mall. The favoured few brought up reports of the grand days to be enjoyed in such regularly patrolled forests as Braemar, Athol, or the Blackmount. The Great North Railway ran to Aberdeen and Inverness, and afterwards the Highland line was opened. Impoverished Highland lairds had struck a gold mine; but the most sanguine were slow to believe in the prospective value of their solitudes. To take a single example of the rapid rise. In 1854, to their bitter subsequent regret the Mackenzies

parted with their hereditary wastes of Applecross. They were sold to the Duke of Leeds for £135,000. On the death of the Duke, a few years afterwards, the property came into the market in three lots and it fetched £206,000. Further subdivisions brought successive startling advances. The same thing has been going on everywhere, though latterly there has been a reaction. Sheep were swept from the hills, as the black cattle had vanished before the sheep; forests were subdivided at fancy rents and enclosed with wire-fencing like a Queensland cattle run or an Argentine *estancia*. When you run up against wire-fencing in the wilds of Ross or Inverness you are reminded of the barbed hedges in the Vale of Harrow and of the villa cockneydom of Tooting or Balham. And apropos to villadom, the primitive but comfortable shooting-lodges have been replaced by the Gothic castle or the Italian mansion. There are house parties and motor cars and French cooks and ladies' maids, where in your little pine-panelled den, like the state cabin of an old paddle steamship, you used to be awakened by the crow of the grouse to take a header in the loch under the window. You might turn out in your night-dress or in *puris naturalibus* without the fear of scandalising anybody. Travelling the winding mountain road from Dingwall to Loch Maree not long ago, I passed the site of one of those familiar forest lodges. There was not even a sign of the ruins that mark the sites of Babylon or Nineveh.

But opposite glared a many-storied structural edifice, of the most florid Corinthian order of architecture. The old grouse or ptarmigan hills—no great extent as deer forests go in the Highlands—had been enclosed, and, as I saw by a paragraph in a local journal the other day, the new proprietor had killed one hundred stags last season. Naturally the round number was suspicious; but if he had done anything like that amount of butchery in the limits, he might as well have been browning broods of chickens in his poultry yard.

Some forty years ago, a man satisfied with moderate sport, and who did not mind hard walking, could have a shooting of his own for a comparative trifle. I knew an officer of the coast-guard who rented half a great parish on the bleak shores of Buchan from Lord Seafield for £12. There was fair partridge shooting, some shreds of grouse moor, and any quantity of duck and snipe; as for the rabbits they swarmed on the sandhills. He did not squander money on keepers, but engaged the farmers in his interests by gifts of game. Another friend paid little more for a most picturesque and accessible shoot on the banks of Loch Lomond, where the early woodcocks sought favourite lying; where roe and black game abounded, with a sprinkling of wild pheasants. I ought to remember the place, not only for the glorious views looking down on the archipelago of the Loch, but because I had a narrow escape from the fate of Mr.

Fawcett. I still carry between the eyes a pellet that made a close shave of the eyeball.

The Highlands and the remoter Lowlands were more primitive then, and, to my mind, infinitely more enjoyable. Even if a man is no misanthrope, as I certainly was not, for I would have gone any day a hundred miles for a dance, there are times when he loves to commune with nature in her solitudes, and to play with some parody of the spirit of adventure. Then away from the great high-roads there was any extent of backcountry, practically trackless and unexplored. Even in the immemorial passes through the hills, the ways were little frequented, except by the keepers or occasional drovers. There was no great exaggeration in the old story of the stonebreaker, asked by a southern tourist whether there was ever any traffic. 'Oh, ay, it's no ill for that,' was the answer; 'there was a packman body passed yesterday, and there's yoursel' the day.' Once I was myself taken by one of the natives for a packman body. Knapsack on shoulder, I was walking across from Braemar to Glen Tilt after a Braemar Gathering. Half way across I was stopped by an old wife in mutch and red roquelaure, who sighted me from afar and rushed out of her turf-roofed hovel to ask 'if I was sellin' things.' That walk, by the way, illustrated some of the perils of field and flood that might beset the guideless wayfarer. You crossed many a streamlet, shrivelled up in its



dry bed in a drouhty summer, but which might come down at any time in raging flood after some waterspout in the hills. Rivers like the Tilt or the Bruar were regularly bridged, though the bridges, then as in Scrope's days, would be as regularly washed away in winter, to be brought back and rebuilt in the spring. But the smaller burns were only spanned by a pine stem, and as they could generally be stepped across, they had to await their turn for the restoration of communications. That walk of mine came off on a glorious day, but the burns were still half-bank high, after a week of unprecedented downpour. You had to cast about to find a practicable fording place, and then it was gingery work on the slippery pavement, stemming the swift rush, knee-deep or up to mid-thigh. The rather that some croaking ravens took an ominous interest in your proceedings. The worst was that you were thrown out of the track and had to regain it through bog and boulder, and, though being benighted in mountain mists was no novel experience, I was glad enough to strike on the road at last and to reach the Atholl Arms as the last lights were being extinguished.

With all the undeniable drawbacks those pedestrian rambles were delightful when you were exulting in health and youth. All the *impedimenta* were a light waterproof and a short trouting-rod strapped to a knapsack almost as light. It only



held a change of flannels and nether raiment, slippers, and the indispensable toilette necessities. It was no use counting over much with the climate, especially on the romantic western coast, unless the flood-gates of heaven were actually opened. The grouse and the sheep were your weather-glasses, and even they sometimes spoke with uncertain sound. The boots awoke you according to orders at what ought to have been sunrise, but had it not been for the tumbler of rum and frothing milk, possibly you could hardly have summoned resolution to rouse yourself. Everything is wreathed in volumes of fleecy vapour. You hear the muffled bell of the early steamer at the little pier somewhere out of black, dreary space. But the grimmer the day, the more you are set upon keeping moving, so you sling your knapsack and hope for the best. The drizzle thickens and your spirits go down. But the West Highlands, like West Ireland, is a land of enchanting surprises, and suddenly there are rifts in the watery clouds which quickly lighten and brighten. Then the sun breaks out in his strength, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race, and the vapours vanish before him, rolling up into nooks and corners of the valleys. By this time you have scaled a commanding height, and a glorious prospect to seaward opens before you; you look down a winding sea-arm with sea-wrack-strewn shores, to islands floating between the sea and the sky, decked out in all the colours of the rain-

bow. In the foreground are the brown sails of the fishing-boats, glittering like burnished gold. But your path lies landward, across the moors. For long miles you have met no human being, and you are in a solitude with no sign of habitation. All the same it is a sensational walk for a naturalist and sportsman. It is solitary but not silent. On all sides is the clamouring of the winged tenants of the wastes; the cheery crow of the grouse cock contrasts with the shrill whistle of the 'whaup' or curlew, and the melancholy wailings of the lapwings who swoop down over your shoulders. As you track the course of the mountain burn, you hear the wild, sweet song of the ring ousel—the mountain blackbird—as you turn a sharp bend in the brawling streamlet, there is the quack of alarm of the mallard and his mate. And forty years ago, when the war of extermination against the winged 'vermin' had scarcely begun, you sighted many species of the picturesque *raptores*. The hawks were there, from the peregrine winging his flight to the distant sea-cliff, stooping at some startled brood of grouse in sheer wantonness, never stopping to pick up his stricken victim, to the pretty little merlin nesting sociably among the moorfowl, but never scrupling to take toll of them all the same.

Moorland it might be and no deer forest; nevertheless in that forest-skirted country you might happen upon outlying deer, jumping out of the moss-pit where they had been bathing, and canter-

ing away within easy gunshot, with blackened and dripping hides. Not infrequently on these occasions the long Highland miles drew out into leagues, and when you stumbled across some gillie or stray shepherd, you learned that you were pretty sure to be belated. As the gloaming came on, you heard the bark of the prowling dog fox, and perchance caught a glimpse of the marauder. There was nothing of the sneaking gait of his persecuted Lowland congener. On the contrary, with his pads on his native heath, he carried himself with the stride and spring of the mountaineer. Other night prowlers there were none, for neither badger nor otter are given to show themselves, and I seldom chanced to see a genuine wild cat. The gloaming had come on and the shadows were falling. If there was a silvering of moonlight, it only confused you when trying to puzzle out the doubtful path. Should you once fairly lose it, the best plan was to seek the friendly burn again, and follow it, though it ran down through rough heather into tangled copsewood. In such circumstances, if you knew vaguely the lie of the land, the hooting of the night owls was a cheery sound, for you knew you were near the pine woods which must be threaded. In these it was easy walking, for there is little undergrowth beneath the silver firs, and you trod softly on a crackling carpet of pine needles. But the flickering moonbeams cast a sinister light through the dark foliage, and superstitious fancies were apt

to steal over you. You recalled wild legends of the Lham Dearg, who haunted Rothiemurcus glades, and the tale of Wandering Willie, when his forbear fell in with the black horseman who led him to the scene of infernal revelry. It was a decided relief, and worth going through much more, to emerge at last on the open strath, and, like Bailie Nicol Jarvie, to welcome the lights of the clachan below you.

There was nothing like such a walk as that to make you appreciate the comfort of the inn. I had considerable experience of the Highland inns, before they developed into hotels, and were swamped with southern tourists. If it was not there you found your warmest welcome, at least the good folk were glad to see you. If you were not exacting and did not hurry them, they were sure to do their best. When you came in dripping and muddy they looked at you askance; you might be a sturdy beggar or a 'sorner' who hoped to sponge on them. The rod and the knapsack disabused them, and then they were all kindness and hospitality. In the change house, which answered to the Spanish *venta*, the only fire was in the kitchen. The warm glow of the peat and bog-oak was as exhilarating as the odours which, if not refined, were refreshing. Ventilation they did not go in for. The prevailing scent was 'bannocks and brose,' with a strong suffusion of whisky. But a brood hen or two, who shared the common sitting-room, showed there were eggs

forthcoming, and mutton hams and flitches, and possibly kippered salmon, were swinging from the blackened rafters. Never have I enjoyed supper more than on these occasions, though indulgence to satiety has sometimes been followed by nightmares and broken dreams, rehearsing the long day's incidents. Especially before experience had warned me against being lured into the good woman's spotless sheets. Latterly I always preferred a shake-down of fragrant meadow hay in the outhouse.

With the better class of inn in small towns or big villages, I established frequent and friendly relations. In many of them the simple old Scottish cookery was to be had in perfection, at least when you could give them a day's warning. In soups they excelled, and in light and simple sweets. In many of these inns the venerable waiter, profoundly interested in the prosperity of the house, was an institution. I fondly remember old Malcolm at Braemar, bowed with years, but active as ever, and an encyclopædia of Highland folk-lore. Also another veteran at Forfar, who coached me up for a visit to Glamis, with its haunting memories and mysterious secret chamber. No one of them ever tempted me into trying their wines, but Glenlivet or Talisker was always forthcoming according to the latitudes; or at the worst, the more potent spirit from illicit stills, strong of the peat-reek, though mellowed by age.

But for the real enjoyment of the Highlands, one



ought to be temporarily at home in them, with headquarters in a wild country with a variety of game. Flat moorland brings brief sport: heavy bags for a week or two, if the season and the weather are favourable; then birds packing, with weary and profitless walking, and a precipitate departure for the South. In the wilder districts rents are generally lower, and if you are keen on shooting of any sort, you get infinitely more value for your money. In Wester Ross, for example, the birds will sit in genial days till well on in November; then with the coming of the black frosts, they are everywhere more approachable. But it is not to the grouse alone you devote your attentions: on the beats you may come across anything and everything, from ptarmigan and blue hares to wild-duck, snipe, and plover.

I spoke of a familiar forest lodge, and no shooting quarter brings back more agreeable memories. Moorland it was, rather than 'forest,' though surrounded on all sides by sanctuaries sacred to the deer. It stood high, though sheltered, on the western slope of the watershed between the North Sea and the Atlantic. To the north was a winding lake, bordered beyond by a line of cliff and cairn, peopled by a colony of wild cats seldom seen. As we sat of an evening in the porch, we could hear their melancholy wailings borne over to us on the breeze, mingled with the twittering of the swallows, which built under the low rafters of the lodge. On drizzly days when the



walking was bad, we used to troll for trout or net the bays for pike, and thither we repaired for the morning header. Sleeping with open windows, one was generally wakened by the crow of the grouse cock, and the first impulse was to look out for signs of the weather. If it promised fairly, the dogs seemed to know it, and there was no chance of going to sleep again, with the impatient chorus from the kennels.

The quarters were cramped, but comfortable. The bedrooms were so many small cabins, panelled with pine, and the fittings were as compactly adjusted as in the old-time sea-going steamer. The low-roofed sitting-room was relatively spacious, communicating by a door and short passage with the kitchen. There were pervading scents of homespun and waterproofs in course of drying, and of savoury cookery. We fared well with the produce of gun and rod, the mountain mutton, and supplies from the Dingwall butcher and Morell's branch establishment at Inverness. Whatever the temperature, the peat was generally kept smouldering on the broad hearth, to be blown into a blaze of an evening, when the kettle was kept boiling for the toddy. There were dull days, no doubt, when remorseless rain was plashing against the windows, for though there was room enough to stretch the legs, the provision of literature was scanty, and we were fain to fall back on cleaning spotless guns, or playing with the young dogs in the kennels.

Though, on the whole, we set rough weather at defiance, and sought recreation abroad in one shape or another. And when the sun broke through the mists with glorious promise, and when the waters had had some short time to subside, all was forgotten. The transformation scene was often magical. You had done your dressing half in the dark, and now the atmosphere was so clear as to be strangely deceptive. Looking out from the porch, across the rolling and broken expanse of brown, green, and purple, the hills that skirted it—haunts of the ptarmigan and eagle—seemed so near, that you fancied you might have distinguished with the naked eye the sheep pasturing in the corries. It was stiff walking before you reached them, as you knew by experience, with rather risky rock work to follow.

There was many a record of mixed bags in the game book, though none of very bloody days, except when there were musters for the massacre of the hill-hare. First, in the swampy meadows in the river vale, where the hay crop was precariously stooked towards the middle of October, were coveys of the small hill-partridge. Then came the grouse, of which nothing is to be said, save that on those moors there was a blessed immunity from disease. The sweep of the epidemic used to be as sharply defied as the passage of the cholera through an Indian cantonment. There were few firs, and it was not much of a country for black

game, yet there were mossy and bracken bits skirted by alders and birches, where you were likely enough to stumble on a brood. Mallards there were on the river and its tributary burns, and often when one was walking listlessly, you were brought sharply to attention by the rise of drake and duck from some velvet-covered moss-pot. Occasionally there were more sensational surprises. The shooting, as I said, was forest-enclosed, and in spite of the wandering shepherds and their sheep-dogs, outlying deer were tempted by the sweet grazing in the hollows. So I have seen hart and hind spring out of the moss within half-gunshot, and of course go away scatheless, for it would have been cruel to pepper them with smallshot. Next came the range of the mountain hares, leading up to their rocky refuges in the home of the ptarmigan, and there I once had another very exceptional experience, more unusual than walking up the wary deer. In a dense mist, my cheek was almost brushed by the wing of a golden eagle. To judge by his scream of consternation, as he shot up into the fog, he was the more taken aback of the two. Snipe were to be picked up anywhere; there were frequent flights of the golden plover, circling round the gun in crescent formation, and giving chances for deadly raking when they settled in line on some low peat bank. With September came the first cocks of the season, lying half-exhausted in the heather, and, for the most

part, wofully out of condition. And there were many birds to interest the naturalist, from hawks on the hover, encouraged in the neighbouring deer forests, to the ring ousel of the rocky rills, with his plaintive song, and to the short-winged grebes that had found their way thither somehow from the sea, to rear happy families in lonely tarns.

That lodge was a resort of mine for successive seasons, but in earlier years I had the rare privilege of being more than once the guest of Horatio Ross, the old deer-stalker. The most lovable and kindly of men, I gratefully reverence his memory. When I was absent on the Continent, and likely to lose my election at the New Club in Edinburgh—I had neglected to replace a seconder who had died—he stepped into the breach. When I was coming up for the Carlton, I chanced to meet him in Pall Mall, and he took infinite trouble in canvassing the committee. In his Highland home he was the most genial of hosts, and Othello was not in it with him in the multiplicity of his sporting reminiscences, from steeplechasing and the hunting field to deer-stalking and pigeon matches at the Red House. He had been hand in glove with all the most famous sportsmen, and, when he had pitted himself against them for heavy bets, had rarely overrated his powers. His most remarkable feats have become matters of history. What impressed me most was his story of how he won what seemed an impossible bet as to the number

of swallows he would kill with a pistol before a nine-o'clock breakfast. It showed his shrewdness as well as his skill. He posted himself at the corner of the house, fluttered a white handkerchief as the bird swept round, and dropped it when it poised. Temperate, though no ascetic, taking his two hours' exercise daily almost up to the last, he was always in high condition. He might have rivalled his old friend Captain Barclay in pedestrianism, and it scarcely taxed his strength when he walked from Blackhall on Deeside to Inverness, as umpire in the match between two friends who were dining with him. They made the bet over the decanters, made the start from the dinner-table, and Captain Ross, as he told me, did not even change his evening shoes.

When I visited him in Ross-shire, he rented Gledfield and Dibidale. Gledfield House was on the banks of the Carron; Dibidale was a narrow deer-forest stretching northwards, and marching with Mr. Mathieson's Ardross. In the Carron I caught my first salmon by a marvellous and most undeserved stroke of luck. It was an awkward river for a tyro to fish; the trees on the pools hanging low over the water, so that much of the casting had to be underhand. Moreover, there had been an unprecedented spell of drought, and for days not a fish had been risen by the experts. Wearied and disgusted, I had been whipping away listlessly, when throwing the heavy rod back over



my shoulder, I had a glimpse of the head and shoulders of a salmon ; the casting-line snapped, and circles of horse-hair festooned themselves round the top joint. My feelings may be imagined. But the very next day I hooked an eight-pound grilse in the 'Lady's Pool,' silvery as if he were fresh run from the sea. A hard fight I had, with my heart in my mouth, for there were birches behind and something like a cataract below, but under the experienced directions of the veteran keeper, the grilse was triumphantly cleiked, when the gut was fretted to a shred.

The lodge at Dibidale was in a wilderness of heath and hills, on a brae sloping down to a burn that murmured or brawled with the changes in the weather. That burn is always associated in my mind with 'watching the passes.' There was rich grazing in Dibidale, and the deer would shift southwards with the dawn from Ardross. You were roused in the dark, to dress by candlelight. A glass of rum and milk with a biscuit, and you emerged from the door to go groping down the brae in Egyptian darkness. The old keeper led the way, swinging a lantern, and a long-legged subaltern followed with a rifle under either arm. You forded the burn on slippery stepping-stones, and 'set the stout heart to the stey brae.' It was an awkward scramble, and I know I used to be pretty well pumped out, before we crested the ridge and separated for our posts in the passes.



But when the sun showed a fiery ball over the mountain to the west, the sights and surroundings in themselves richly repaid you for the climb. There was no snow and less sublimity, but I have never seen more glorious sunrises from the Rigi or the Faulhorn. Then the excitement! Of course it does not come up to the tremulous 'buck fever,' when the novice is almost within rifle-shot of a mighty hart, nearly collapsing after the long and heart-wearing stalk. Yet the suspense of waiting in hopeful expectation is intense. Each deceptive sound tells on the nerves, and excitement culminates when you hear the unmistakable hoof treads, with the slipping of the foot on gravel or shingle, and the occasional pause of suspicious hesitation. It may not be the highest kind of sport, but perhaps it is the most sustained strain of the senses.

The worst was, that unless you were in the hardest conditions, it took it out of you for the rest of the day. There was always a resource in the burn, where there was good trouting or 'guddling,' and the family kept their hands in at rifle shooting, at which the practice was wonderful. The hand of the old stalker was steady as ever, and four of his five sons were crack performers. Edward, as is well known, was the first winner of the Queen's prize at Wimbledon, and Hercules, the second brother, had a memorable record in potting rebel sepoy in the Indian Mutiny.

It was most comfortable being quietly at home in your own lodge with your own friends, where everything could be ordered to your own liking. But I never passed a pleasanter August and September than when we were quartered in the village inn. The shooting had hung on the market; it had gone ridiculously cheap at the last moment, and the mansion with the partridge ground had been reserved. As to the quarters first appearances were unpromising enough. There was nothing poetical or romantic about the village street, and the whitewashed, two-storied hostel was prosaic in the extreme. But those first impressions were deceptive. It is true the horse-hair furniture of the sitting-room was the reverse of luxurious; the window sashes worked badly, and in the bedrooms were stuffy box-beds. But as we were out on the moors most of the day, and came home tired, these slight drawbacks did not greatly signify. The landlord proved the best of good fellows, and catered for us in sumptuous style. With the profusion of game—for we had made a capital bargain—we might have dispensed with the attentions of a butcher. But each evening the table groaned under saddles and sirloins, and when they went down to the kitchen, the landlord and the keepers seemed to keep a free supper-table for all and sundry. Naturally we trembled for the *mauvais quart d'heure*, but the bills were most mysteriously moderate. I think the tame dreari-

ness of the village gave a keener zest to the breezy freshness of the moor, and the charms of the semi-Highland scenery. Changing the paving-stones for the spring of the heather, the spirits went up automatically. Wild it was on the western horizon, where you looked up to the quaintly named hills, famous alike in history, legend, and song, the Tap O'Noth and the Buck of the Cabrach. Below them, cornfields and copses ran up into the heather, and the snipe bogs were interspersed with oases of green rushes, where the dogs were sure to come to a stand over broods of black game. There were crystal springs where we made our midday halts, and at one of them, the Well of Correnie, a madcap prank brought me once to humiliating grief. The luncheon basket used to come out on a lively young cob who had scarcely been broken to the shafts or the saddle. One day it came into my head to make a shooting pony of him, so I mounted and blazed off a barrel. Incontinently he bolted. Trying to hold to the gun, I was shot off into a moss-pot. I emerged half-choked but little the worse, though recovering the gun gave us infinite trouble. As for the cob, like the scapegoat of the Pentateuch, he went off into the wilderness, and after a long chase a gilly came back with him, 'baith o' us sair forfoughten,' as he sadly declared, before recruiting with a 'caulker' and a heavy supper.

## CHAPTER XIV

### KEEPERS AND HILL SHEPHERDS

NOT a few of my most enjoyable days have been passed in company of keepers and simple-minded hill shepherds. They were intelligent, companionable, and instructively conversable when they came to know you well. As for the old keepers, they taught me anything I know in the way of sport or natural history. Their knowledge was great, and their methods were eminently practical. The first of my tutors was a veteran, who, I am sorry to remember, was something of a scamp. He took his duties easily; but that was the fashion of the time, or the neighbourhood. He never thought of leaving the blankets to look out for poachers, and he lay in bed the better part of the Sunday, for he held that if a man kept sober through the week, he was entitled to get drunk on a Saturday night. Old Craigie was well paid but not pampered, and all his habits were in the rough. He shared a loft at the 'barn yards' with two or three of the ploughmen, and his couch with a couple of his favourite terriers. He made no pretensions and gave himself no airs. When I knew him he may

have been sixty, though he looked considerably more, and his wish seemed to be to slip through the world and the woods unobserved. Death on the vermin, a deadly enemy of hawk, polecat, or weasel, he trod the soft carpet under the firs and the crackling leaves in the beech woods with the stealthy step of the Red Indian. His weather-bleached velveteens, much the worse for wear, blended well with the foliage and the withering bracken. His keen, grey eyes were roving everywhere, reading 'sign' like print on each scrap of soft ground. He and his terriers had an abiding feud with the otter, and loved nothing better than tracking the nocturnal marauder to his holt, and marking him down for sport with some couples of crossbreeds. His constant companions were a pair of rough terriers, never more or less, who shadowed him at his heels and answered to a crook of his little finger. They had frequent opportunities of showing their stuff. The estate he had in special charge—there were two others within walking distance and also under his guardianship—had been little cared for through a long minority. The woods were untrimmed, and where the ground was damp, undergrown with almost impenetrable thicket; the ill-drained meadows grew luxuriant tufts of rushes, where hares, 'maist as big as lambs,' as he said, used to squat; and the gravel banks and loose stone dikes were honeycombed with subterranean pass-

ages, and literally swarming with rabbits. The tenants protested they were 'just devoured with the beasts.'

As trapper and vermin-killer, with an eye for nests of all sorts, Craigie was the most fascinating of companions for a boy. Shooting of some sort was going on all the year round, for rabbits and wood pigeons must be killed down, and there was no nursing of the covers for big autumn shoots. The hawk would glance off the nest among the topmost spruce boughs; the flash of the gun and down he would come, perchance with broken wing, fighting still on his back with beak and talons, while up I would hurry, hand over hand, to make prize of the eggs or the savage nurslings.

Craigie was on the best of terms with the tenants, for he had *carte blanche* to supply them liberally with rabbits and so far stop their grumbling. When we crossed the thresholds without the ceremony of a knock, the whisky bottle was produced as a matter of course. Nevertheless, there was a standing cause of quarrel with the good wives, whose cats would mysteriously disappear. Not that there was really much mystery about it, for those stravaiging cottage cats were the most mischievous of poachers. Naturally, Craigie never pled guilty to many an unhallowed burial in a fox-hole or rabbit burrow, but there were always the notorious proclivities of his shadows, invariably named Rory and Mark. Sometimes



there was what the Scottish Law Courts call hame-sucken, when the cat was slaughtered on its own premises. Mark would fly straight at the throat; Rory had a deadly knack of cracking the spine. It was sharp if not happy despatch, and in the woodlands that was the invariable finish of a scrambling, yelping chase, when the quarry had been treed and brought down crippled. Since then I have had many a feline friend and favourite who confidently shared the hearth-rug with the dogs, but I confess with shame that, in those boyish days, there was nothing I found more exciting than the cat chase. Craigie, though he took things easily, had a method of his own with poachers. On the home estate he had little trouble; his vagabond neighbours had a kindly regard for him and sought their pleasure or profit elsewhere. But one of the outlying properties, although almost unpreserved, somehow always showed hares and partridges in plenty. Yet, like the Morayshire of old times, it was a border territory where all men took their prey. One year, on the Castle farm, there was a covey of white partridges. The young laird was much interested, and old Craigie was extremely anxious to save them. The man he was most afraid of was a miller, who, renting a small shooting, made it an excuse for raiding all around. So, as Craigie told me, 'I took Watt to the inn; I gave him all the whisky and porter he could drink and gat his

promise to spare the birds.' The covey disappeared; it must have been netted bodily. Watt was more indignant than Craigie. Poachers had been poaching on the poacher's privileges of chase. He had accepted blackmail for the albinos and his honour was in question. He ran the offenders down at considerable trouble, scandal, and expense, and handed them over to justice.

Craigie fell latterly on somewhat evil days, for he had trouble with his minister and the kirk session. Consequently his popularity declined with the tenant folk, who were zealous kirk-goers, and the whisky tap was turned off at his favourite resorts. Moreover, he was falling into the sere and yellow leaf, his eyes were growing dim, and his joints were stiffening. He could no longer leap the ditches or fly the tottering dikes. Sooner or later the rheumatism must inevitably come up with the rustic who has set weather at defiance and seldom changed his clothes. Craigie was to be retired on a pension, and consented after much grumbling. For he had to confess, and it showed his constitutional reticence, that he was to have a home with a son who had made money in Australia, and had the grace not to be ashamed of a letterless father who had never corresponded with him for the best of reasons. He had all possible comforts in his closing years: how far he was happy is another question. When superannuated judges or bishops stick to their benches,

often the mere love of lucre has little to do with their reluctance to retire.

M'Intyre—that was not his real name—succeeded Craigie retired. He was a man of very different type and temper. Though of Highland breed he had migrated young, and to all intents was a Lowlander. It is five-and-forty years since I began the long and lasting friendship, and I remember when I saw him first, how I was impressed by his fine presence and air of simple dignity. He stood well over six feet, and among the beaters at a battue he looked like a noble deerhound in the scratch pack of the Highland foxhunter. With his advent there was introduced a new system of preserving and regular night-watching. He had a couple of aides sent out on outpost duty, and he drilled them thoroughly. You felt that M'Intyre was your equal—your superior in many things—and soon he was the valued friend of the family. The dogs and the boys took to him naturally. He had little trouble in breaking the dogs, for his methods were kindness and gentle firmness. One sharp word of command would check the wildest youngster in a mad burst, or bring the most self-willed old ruffian to heel. The boys of the house, through successive generations, came to look up to him and love him as a father, and the most anxious of mothers could safely trust him with their morals. The kennels and his cottage were a quarter of a mile from the mansion, the

path leading through the flower-gardens and the little coppice, with the Holy Well commemorating the site of an old hermitage, where a brown-speckled trout kept solitary state. If a boy was missing after breakfast, it was at the kennels he was sure to be found, somewhere between the ferret hutches and the row of beehives. Out of the shooting season a long stroll through fields and woods with M'Intyre was intoxicating joy. There was endless excitement in the bird-nesting in the fields and fallows, in brake and coppice; in the hunting up the teal or waterhen in the sedges, or the quest after pheasant eggs in spinney or hedgerow in the springtime, when the trouble was to elude the watchful rooks. Our guide could tell all about their habits; and there was seldom a migrant he could not recognise, or a skulker he could not identify by the note.

His master had grown up with him, and they were close companions. Of the two, the keeper was scarcely the less welcome guest when they went the round of neighbouring houses in the shooting season. When he had organised the autumn shooting parties at home, it was pleasant to hear the hearty greetings of the gentlemen and to see the cordial clasp of the hands. No doubt he had handsome largesses in his time, for with frugality he left a snug little fortune. But his beloved master died before him and he never altogether got over it. In fullest mental power

the laird suddenly succumbed to an insidious brain attack. For weeks he lay between life and death ; though the end was certain it was long deferred. M'Intyre revolutionised all his habits. The man who only breathed freely in the open air, shut himself up in the sick chamber and became the assiduous nurse. He slept in the dressing-room, and through the day he was treading softly on stocking-soles or stooping tenderly over the sick pillow ; nor had he ever the satisfaction of being recognised, for the patient was in a stupor of unconsciousness. The watching, the worry, and the grief told on that strong constitution. He fell ill himself, and passed many a weary day in hospital, though his attentions were gratefully repaid and everything was done for his comfort, till at last he was carried home to pass from his cottage to the churchyard.

Old Peter of Strathtay comes in somewhere between Craigie and M'Intyre. Like M'Intyre he was a familiar of the household, and had taken the exact measure of his old master's foot ; like Craigie he had the primitive habits and something of the stealthy gait of the savage. His back was bowed with bearing burdens of game, for he loved long solitary rambles and would sleep out of a night in a haystack or under a gravestone. His passion was night wandering ; his methods were those of the poacher, and his dogs had been broken to them. The old fellow took a fancy to



me, so sometimes I was privileged to accompany him; and well I remember those sensational nights with the lessons to be learned from the wild book of nature. The nights, as he chose them, were generally starry, with fair moonlight, and the moon might be wading in watery clouds, with the sough of a sighing wind that threatened to bring up a rain burst. One night the moon was suddenly eclipsed; half the heavens were overcast with what seemed the wings of some monstrous sea-fowl in rapid flight. Peter, like Craigie, had his inseparable attendants. The one-eyed old otter-hound gave a mournful growl, the limping terrier whimpered and tucked his tail between his legs. 'It's likin' to be an ill night,' said Peter; 'but God be praised, we're no that far from shelter, for the auld kirk is hard by.' Though reputed to be haunted, it was one of Peter's favourite refuges, and there we sheltered, while the rain came down in torrents, in a low out-building, where the parishioners in former days used to keep watch against the resurrection men, when villains like Burke and Hare were driving their nefarious trade. There, making himself comfortable with pipe and whisky flask, he curdled my blood with his soul-thrilling ghost stories, till when the storm had passed as Peter had foretold, my nerves were strung to a pitch that made me exceptionally impressionable. Yet it was a cheery change to emerge into starlight and



moonlight from the gloom and the ghoulish tales ; though all the night watchers and the night walkers seemed to have been roused into life and action. The bats that had been clinging to the kirk rafters in the daytime came flapping across our faces, and swooping down on my white collar like gulls on a winged companion. The kirk owls were vociferous, and then we came across their silken-winged congeries in the sylvan glades we threaded. We heard the bark of the wandering fox ; but that is one of the most common of nocturnal sounds. Sometimes it was answered by the bay of the watch dog at the homestead or the yelping of the cottage cur.

Once—it was not on that night, but on another—I remember Peter laying his hand on my arm. We paused and listened ; then I heard the surly grunt as of a pig or pigling : it was in a mossy glade, honey-combed with rabbit holes and bestrewed with beech-nuts. Then emerged from a bramble thicket a family party, looking much what I should imagine a train of South American peccaries to be. A venerable dog badger headed the procession, grunting stertorously and industriously grubbing. The dogs, hushed by an uplifted hand, were trembling with excitement. His abstraction was complete, when he suddenly got a whiff of our wind, sniffed, snorted, and would have scuttled, but Peter's gun was at his shoulder and the grey patriarch rolled over. Peter opined ' that the beast

was no that hurtful, though he had a keen nose for the eggs o' pheesan or pairtrick'; but Peter, like his grizzled otter hound, was death on anything in the shape of vermin from fox or marten cat to the generally innocuous hedgehog.

Peter, though bearing a Highland name, and domesticated on the Highland border, was Lowland born and bred. The genuine Highland keepers, guardians of the wild deer-forests and solitary wastes, were of a different stamp. They were generally reserved and seldom garrulous, save when under the influence of good fellowship and fiery toddy. Though they might discourse in the Saxon fluently, it was a foreign tongue; for the most part they thought in the native Gaelic, and lisped with an accent of which they were shyly self-conscious. Some of them had got so used to self-communion in the solitudes, that they had acquired a habit of thinking aloud, which they could not always repress. Black John had found a landward berth in a forest on the marches of Ross and Sutherland, though he had been bred a fisherman in the Lewis and had always a craving for the sea. He had come, as many others of the gillies, from the herring fishing to take service on the hill for a single season; but unlike most of the islesmen he became a fixture, always protesting his intention to flit. The fact was, he had got into trouble poaching on the Long Island, and the poaching *virus* was in his blood. His master soon

learned his worth, for he had the eye of a falcon, the scent of a sleuth-hound, an instinct for the wiles and strategy of the deer, with the weather knowledge of a black-faced ram or an old grouse cock. He was a far safer guide than the glass as to what the morrow was likely to bring forth. There that prescience was of exceptional importance, for the forest was much mixed up with those surrounding it. Dogs were seldom or never used; partly because the lessees were deadly shots, principally because they could not afford to scare the deer. The forest was full of fine feeding in sheltered corries, and many a herd would migrate thither to stuff to repletion.

John was habitually silent, seemingly sullen, but there were times when he would become expansive. As when a difficult stalk had been triumphantly accomplished, when the deer had been gralloched and admired, and the flasks had gone round with compliments and congratulations. Keeping house alone through the winter in the deserted lodge he was given to brooding, but he had the rude piety of the fervid Celtic temperament, and his mind was a dark reservoir of legends and superstitions. Once the floodgates were opened ever so little, they came with a rush. A Catholic by creed, he was something of a pagan. Professing unbelief in them, he would weave weird fancies and tell strange tales of the monsters said to lurk in the depths of bottomless lakes, of witches—probably

skeins of wild geese—flitting overhead with unearthly screeches on the wings of the storm, and of corpses of notorious evil livers which had played blood-curdling cantrips when the door of the deathchamber had been left ajar and the due precautions against the powers of hell had been neglected. When I have heard him croaking them out, I have been reminded of Southey's soul-thrilling ballad of 'The Old Woman of Berkeley.'

Once wound up the way to keep him going was a liberal supply of whisky. He was a hard drinker, but could carry any quantity of liquor discreetly, and as his comrade Donald used enviously to remark, 'John was never a hair the waur.' John was a confirmed misogynist; he delighted in a dance, but it was he who emphatically expressed the conviction, that it was 'the weemen that aye spiled a ball.' John sulked and smoked over the peat-fire through the winter. Donald, who lived with his wife in a snug cottage on the high road, was scandalously neglectful of his domestic ties. Of a winter evening, and too often in the summer time, he was to be found either at the old toll bar, a chartered gossip shop, where his habitual crony was a convivial road-mender, or at the inn, a couple of miles down the strath, a favourite stopping-place of drovers and pedlers. John would only come out with his stories on occasions; Donald was always to be drawn. He came of a sporting race of lax principles and

predatory habits. His father, who had been head-keeper and henchman of the laird in the savage Torridon district, where the bastions and buttresses of granite have been worn into rifts and caves in course of ages by the Atlantic surges, could tell of the times when the king's warrant scarcely ran there. He had been at the making of the first road, not much more than seventy years before, which first opened up communications. That revolutionary improvement was far from welcome to men who eked out a precarious subsistence by smuggling, poaching, and illicit distilling. It brought the sheriff, the revenue officer, and the gauger to their doors. As a child Donald had sat at the feet of a grandfather who could tell of the golden age. The son of the second generation had been half-reclaimed when taken into the laird's service, but the patriarch had used to go out with the bands of free shots, who roamed the wastes in such strength that the most daring of foresters dared not mell or meddle with them. They lay out in their plaids, they levied contributions on the shepherds, or bartered muirfowl and venison for meal and mutton.

Likely enough Donald embroidered romances that had lost nothing in the relation. An inimitable *raconteur*, he had the fire and flow of the Neapolitan improvisatore. Probably he was never strictly veracious when he recounted adventures of his own ; but at least he gave them an air of vivid



realism, as he struck the attitudes and rehearsed the scenes. He told of marvellous escapes when lost in the mists or blinding snow-drift—but these are frequent experiences of all hillmen. Of how he was most nearly brought to death's door when a cairn of loose stones came down in a landslide—he called it an earthquake—where he lay for four-and-twenty hours with a broken ankle, hearing at last the shouts of a search party, but fearing that his own response was too feeble to attract their attention. It was only when he was silenced, and in the depths of despair, that a far-ranging collie smelt him out. But the tragedy that brought tears to his eyes was the fate of a favourite dog. The poor brute in eager pursuit of a wounded fox, had got 'rock fast' on the ledge of a precipice where there was no turning back; and Donald, after being fruitlessly lowered over the beetling cliffs, had to abandon the helpless Bran to his fate, and to listen day after day to piteous appeals, becoming fainter and fainter as strength ebbed away.

Donald's stories carry me south to very different scenes in the Isle of Purbeck. Burdon, hereditary keeper on a broad Dorsetshire estate, stretching seaward to the chalk downs and St. Alban's Head, had many a tale to tell, handed down from his fathers, of smugglers and wreckers, of signal lights flashing out from solitary homesteads or the hovels of half-savage squatters, of trains of horses with clanking chains, winding up on the chalk-tracks



through the Combes, and of wrecks of noble merchantmen like the *Halsewell*, East Indiaman, when the countryside from far and near turned out to save life or look out for salvage. Burdon was the type of the portly English yeoman, broad in the shoulders and broader in the beam; the brass buttons of his coat behind were shining oases in a vast expanse of weather-worn velvet. Seen from the front his corporation was Falstaffian, and he had taken life luxuriously from the cradle. His cottage, sheltering under a clump of pines, was such a combination of old English quaintness and snugness as Birkett Foster delighted to paint. The incessant yelping from the adjacent kennels—they included a boisterous little pack of dwarf beagles which would have sent Carlyle into a lunatic asylum in a week—was music to his accustomed ears and lulled him peacefully to sleep. Not that he needed lulling, for his constitution was somniferous. He has been seen to drop off to sleep on his sturdy legs after a solid luncheon, as he was watching the dogs working in the turnips, and when he sat of a Sunday under his master, a squire-parson, had he not been privileged, his stentorian snores would have scandalised the small congregation. His cottage showed every sign of free housekeeping—huge, home-baked loaves in the cupboard, flitches in the chimney corner, a cask of strong home-brewed ale from the Hall always on strike. The living-room, decorated in sylvan

fashion, was in excellent taste. Dressed skins did duty for carpet and hearthrug. These could be taken up and shaken, when he came stumping in with muddy boots. Guns, traps, and game-bags adorned the walls, and on the shelves were such zoological and ornithological curiosities as silvered pheasants, pied badgers, and phenomenal pikes. On the gable and on the pollarded elm, hard by, were mouldering Montfaucons of gibbeted vermin. Burdon, with all his love of ease, had not been averse to a rough and tumble in his youth, but latterly he had devolved the duties of night watching on his deputies. Besides the corpulence and shortened wind which made it a stiff business at the best of times to breast the chalk hills, he went with a halting limp, the souvenir of an affair with poachers. He had been pitched down a chalk-pit, where he was left for dead, and dead he nearly was when picked up some twelve hours afterwards.

Punctually each morning he went through the ceremony of going to the gun-room for the orders he seldom got and never desired. As punctually he adjourned to the servants' hall to share a tankard with the old butler. He had two promising lads who were being brought up to the ancestral calling. Both were keen sportsmen and quick shots. But while Samuel was told off to superintend the marking and signalling—indispensable in that country of meadow and moor, chequered with copses and crossed by chalk-

ridges—Garge's business was to follow hard on the guns, with a greybeard of the home-brewed slung to his shoulders. Ascetic athletes assure us that cold tea is the best thing in the world to walk on. It may be so, but for myself, in the North, I have always stuck to spring water laced with whisky, and though I should not recommend strong Dorsetshire ale as a liquor to train on, I never found it throw me much out of condition. Anyhow Burdon had flourished on it, and in the days of one's youth, with a superabundance of exercise, you could venture safely on any liberties. There was nothing we liked better than to turn into the keeper's cottage, when homeward bound after a long day in the coverts, and gratify his good lady by reckless indulgence in tea with the richest of Dorsetshire cream and with the golden butter steaming on the cakes she brought us hissing hot from the griddle. We left the dinner to take care of itself, nor was the confidence often misplaced. Peace to the memories of that kindly couple: they sleep under the yew trees outside the little church where Burdon was used to snore and slumber.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE SHEPHERDS AND THE POACHERS

I HAVE made friends with sundry Highland shepherds, and have a great regard for them, and much sympathy with their hard and solitary lives. The sweetest of tempers would be apt to turn sour in the lonely shealing, isolated from all human companionship, with its manifold cares and responsibilities, with the ceaseless strain on the nerves. As a rule the shepherds hasten to get married, but imagine the lot of the celibate, with no company but his collies. His evensong as he goes home in the gloaming, is the scream of the eagle or the croak of the raven, and through the nights those dogs of his are baying the moon or answering the challenge of the prowling fox. Weary and soaked to the skin, he has to do his own cooking, and as he has neither leisure nor energy to 'shift his clothes,' no wonder rheumatics steals upon him early. He knows the lie of the land well, but many a time when belated in darkness or mists, he has to sleep out in some cleft of the rock, on a couch of damp heather shoots with his plaid for a coverlet. He is answerable for the sheep, which

are periodically mustered and numbered. Reading the weather like a book, in late autumn he sees the signs of a 'breeding storm,' and whistling to his dogs he wanders forth to head back the sheep from the heights to the hollows. The sea-fowl with wild cries are drifting landward, the grouse are restless, and, surest symptom of all, the fox with light bounds is hurrying to his home in the cairn, stopping from time to time to prick his ears and listen. The storm bursts and the rain descends in torrents: all the more reason for the shepherd going forward, for he knows that on the morrow there will have been drownings in the strath, and that eagles and ravens will be battenning on the 'braxie.' He does what may be done before darkness settles down, and then if it be possible, he would get back to his fireless fireside. But each burn and rill is rising in spate, and the stream from which he fills his water-butt is half breast high and raging furiously when he gropes his way to the post that marks the ford and the stepping-stones. Within a gunshot of supper and the box-bed, he may have to curl up in the moss flow, with his whimpering dogs, famished and shivering.

Yet that is a trifle to being abroad in the winter blizzards, when the flock may be smothered in the snowdrifts. The bitter wind pierces through the thickest clothing, and he is likely enough to get lost in the blinding snowflakes. A slip on the rocks may sprain an ankle, or treading carefully as

he may, he may fall into a treacherous snow-wreath. Once caught to the armpits, there is slight chance of extrication. All things considered, it is wonderful that the casualties come so seldom, and that, save in exceptional cases and in the lambing season, so few of the sheep are missing. These sheep are extraordinarily hardy, and seldom succumb to anything but suffocation. There is little to choose between the Highland black-faced with the 'snuff-mull' curled horns and the aliens of southern breed. Both wear warm under-vests of close wool, with shaggy overcoats as impervious as Irish frieze. They can exist for days on starvation fare, and like the deer have an instinct for scraping among the snow, where they are likely to get at the coarse but nutritious herbage. Where the shepherd's strength is taxed to the utmost, is in such a storm as is described on Exmoor in *Lorna Doone*, and in the Highlands he has to go far further afield than Jan Ridd, to dig into the drifts and save the survivors.

The shepherd has other enemies to fight than the snow and the rain floods. I do not believe foxes or eagles do much harm to the old sheep, but they are terribly destructive in the lambing season. All the more, that since the extension of the deer forests, the eagles have been generally strictly preserved, which is gratifying from the picturesque point of view. But if a sheep is crippled or ailing, the eagle is always on the look-



out, guided by the ravens and hooded crows. For the eagle is the most voracious of gluttons, and the best chance of the shepherd taking his revenge, is when he weathers on him when gorged to the beak with drowned mutton. Then the prince of the air and the mountains may be knocked senseless with the staff. It is not so easy to circumvent the fleet and wily fox, who does infinitely more harm. He has his lair in the recesses of the half-impregnable cairn, laughs at the comparative lumbering of the swiftest collies, and is only to be forced from his hold by varmint terriers. Consequently none of his rare visitors is more welcome to the shepherd than the professional fox-hunter with his mixed pack. With the 'tail' of his professional dogs come keepers and gillies, each with his own canine attendants; and then dens are stormed, and there may be merciless slaughter of prolific vixens with their bloodthirsty litters.

The keepers should be as welcome as the fox-hunter, and so they often are and always ought to be. Any sensible man must come to that conclusion when he sees the refuse of the fox's larder on the stone-slip from the cairn or on the ledge of the cliff. There is a blending of feathers, fur, and wool—sometimes, even the relics of sea-trout and salmon. The fox is the common enemy who should bring keeper and shepherd together; but though the keeper may have as much at stake, it is the shepherd who commands the situation. With

the forest he has no concern, but on the moor he is practically master. So a diplomatic and smooth-spoken head-keeper is invaluable, for if he once gets to feud with the guardian of the sheep, it is a very one-sided affair. The shepherd is out early and late, with his keen-scenting dogs ranging before him. He knows the nesting-place of each brood of grouse or blackgame, and can net the young coveys, if so disposed. Should he scorn to make a profit of the quarrel as is often the case, if 'his back has been set up,' he can maliciously smash the eggs. A good deal of netting of the heather goes on in the second week of August, when the birds are smuggled to the South which are sold at the poulterers' on the Twelfth. Norwegian they are called: *credat Judæus*, for the British Isles have a monopoly of the red grouse. Too often, it is matter of certainty that the shepherds must be in league with the poachers, for they are the best of all watchers, when you enlist their friendly assistance.

And that is very easily done, for, take them all in all, they are an honest and self-respecting set of men. Many a weary league from the kirk, their Sunday reading is often the Bible and the *Pilgrim's Progress*. The shepherd with his trials and troubles is naturally short in the temper. If he is misanthropic, it is because he so seldom sets eyes on a fellow creature. But only take him in the right way, and he is the most kindly of hosts and

the most friendly of companions. The diplomatic keeper drops in with a whisky bottle in the game-bag, and the latest copies of the county paper in his pocket. He brings the freshest gossip from market or kirkyard; he discusses the price and prospects of wool, and professes to have at his finger ends the last quotations for ewes or wethers from the sale-yards of Aberdeen or the Falkirk Tryste. A morning call is especially welcome, and in confidential chat on questions of heather burning, the keeper can twist his host round his finger, much to their mutual advantage.

But the day to be marked with a white stone in the shepherd's calendar is when the shooting lessee—stranger though he may be—who has previously established himself in favour, graces the shealing with his presence. On the first visit the host was probably as 'stand-off' as his dogs, who jumped up on the turf-sodden roof to yelp savagely at the sportsman's setters. But when the shepherd finds that his visitor pulls off his stalking cap as he stoops under the lintel and shows no shadow of condescension, he meets him with the frank cordiality of a gentleman; and when one of these solitaires gets into a flow of talk, it would be hard to find a more entertaining companion. Condemned in ordinary to silence they meditate the more; they surprise you with startlingly original sentiments, and the commonplaces and ordinary incidents of their daily lives are matter

for thrilling romances. The morning call is all very well, but I must say it is somewhat trying to accept a night's quarters. Once I taxed the hospitality of Angus Chisholm, a special friend, and I never cared to repeat the experiment. Angus was capital company, but he was a bachelor and no hand at cookery. The slices of the mutton ham were scorched and impregnated with peat smoke; the braxie he pressed on me as a special delicacy was diabolically 'green'; it took all my wit and tact to pass it down to the retriever at my feet; and the spirits which were his pride, if I was not greatly mistaken, had come fresh from an illicit still. When it came to turning in, the sheets on the bed he insisted on resigning had not even the delusive purity of the cottage where there is a housewife. I knew well that the vermin would be on the rampage, and there I drew the line, at the risk of hurting his feelings. As it was, after the whisky I had a troubled night on the settle, enveloped in plaids and sheepskins.

Angus was a magnificent fellow, but he went with a limp, the souvenir of a terrible experience. In an iron frost he slipped—fortunately near his own door—and broke an ankle. The cold was intense, the pain was severe, the limb swelled to portentous size, he was miles away from help of any kind, and twenty or more from a doctor. For three days and nights he lay untended, his body racked with pain, and his mind with anxiety for

the flock left shepherdless. He dragged himself out to the peat stack for fuel; he repeatedly re-kindled the smouldering peats, 'slooking' handfuls of meal in lukewarm water. Sometimes he slept, and occasionally he swooned, not knowing how long he had lain in unconsciousness. Giving himself up for lost he made a manful fight, and rescue came when it could be least expected. A belated poacher tried the door and found Angus in a 'dwam,' with a collie stretched on top of him. He was a handy rascal; put things shipshape as far as possible, fomented the limb, fed the patient, applied the whisky freely—externally and internally—and with daybreak hurried off to seek for the surgeon. Angus's grand constitution stood him in good stead, and except for that limp, as he said himself, 'he was never a hair the waur.'

The shepherds of the olden time and the hill crofters, for fear, favour, or kinship, used to stand in with the poachers. Like the scattered keepers they had little choice when the country was terrorised by roving bands, or by athletic stalkers of local fame who preferred to work singlehanded. It was in the cottage of a weather-beaten veteran, who by the way could tell another thrilling story of a wife lying unburied for a fortnight in a memorable snowstorm, that I was privileged to 'become acquent' with big Duncan Mackay. Duncan Mohr, as he was called, had been a mighty man of mark and muscle. Though



advanced in years, no two of the agents of the law would have much cared to tackle him. He had always been generous of gifts which cost him nothing but powder and shot, and many a blessing was invoked on his head by the widows, the orphans, and the ailing. I doubt not he kept his good friend the shepherd well supplied with muir-fowl, hill-hares, and shoulders of venison. Had there been elections for parish councils in those days he would have walked in easily at the head of the poll. For there was no denying that Duncan was the most munificent of poachers. His story is typical of hill society as it once was. He might have lived happy in the universal respect of his neighbours, but with Duncan, as with all men, there was a rift in the lute. Partly from fear and partly from good fellowship the keepers of the chief never 'steered' him. It is true they had to watch many a league of hill and many a mile of half-hidden salmon water, and, as Duncan had small difficulty in dodging them, his sport became unpalatably tame. Sometimes when Satan got the upper hand, he would actually throw himself across their path, but his friends were blind, or deaf to the gun-reports, and Duncan was far from a well-contented man.

Highland property rose in the market and the chieftain was tempted to sell. Duncan heard the news with sorrow, and indeed his lamentations were so loud that his motives were suspected.



The ungrateful hill folk declared that the old stalker was grieving at the prospects of a stricter rule. It was rumoured that the Southerner who had bought the estates was to begin with sweeping changes. He went about the revolution generously enough. The ancient keepers were to be pensioned, but they were to be replaced by a corps of zealous strangers. As the ill news spread, Duncan brightened up. His chance had come and he might sate himself with risks and adventures. No need now to thrust himself on the keepers' notice; the game was all the other way. His cottage was watched and his outgoings were shadowed. With all his native gifts on the alert, he found it hard to keep his own larder supplied with game; his pride was hurt and necessarily his benefactions were restricted. It was the latter trouble he felt most acutely. Many a night he slept out on the heather in his plaid, for fear of compromising his friends by seeking shelter in some secluded bothy. He even took to reducing his charges of powder, thereby increasing the trouble of his stalking, and—what he regretted still more—the suffering of the wounded deer.

He grumbled, of course, but on the whole he enjoyed it. Now there was no lack of sensation; there was the double zest of hunting and being hunted. Then, to cut the story short, came an incident which again changed the course of his career. The new proprietor, though a novice at

the deer-stalking, was as zealous on sport as himself and as free handed. Duncan could not help admiring him, for like the last Glengarry of famous memory though lacking his forest craft, he would go on the deer path for a day or more, alone and unattended. Naturally, he generally came home empty handed, which, as Duncan explained, was the more to his credit. One dark autumn evening Duncan had actually gone astray in the gathering gloaming and drifting mists. He deemed himself lucky when he struck a torrent bed in a corrie which must lead him down to the strath. Among treacherous land-slides and rugged boulders, with the bit burn he could not see murmuring guidance in the blackness, he heard groans and uncanny speech, as of some wandering soul in pain. It was a mischancy place, Duncan was superstitious, and more than inclined to take to the hill again. But like Rab Tull in *The Antiquary*, he kept a Highland heart, said a bit of a prayer, and held forward. In the burn bed he picked up the new proprietor, who had had an ugly fall and was badly hurt. Duncan, who played the Good Samaritan, made light of the rescue, but the grateful Saxon thought otherwise. And his gratitude took the unwelcome form of giving peremptory orders that his preserver was to have free licence and liberty. Duncan was a saddened man when I met him. He seldom cared to take down rifle or rod : he had gained flesh but fallen off in

spirit and sinew. Yet he liked the new lord of the soil so well, that shortly afterwards he condescended to ask a favour. It was a small loan to help him to emigrate to join a kinsman in North Western Canada, which he faithfully promised to repay. So the old poacher when well on in the seventies left his native glen, simply because agreeable poaching had become impossible.

Duncan Mohr had his counterpart in Kerry. In West Ireland, where the law was even weaker, there were fewer temptations. On the stretches of barren hill the grouse were kept down by the hawks and the hooded crows. On the wide moorlands with their quaking bogs, there was little to be shot save duck and snipe. Though the red deer still ranged the Kerry hills, there were no regular forests. Moreover the lawless occupants of lonely cabins were seldom rich enough to buy a fowling-piece or pay for powder and shot. Dragging a salmon pool or spearing the fish by torchlight was another matter. Yet many a lawless poacher has been bred in the far West, and the Irish Celt has an insinuating impudence of his own, to which his graver Gaelic cousin can make no pretension. A Kerry landlord was sorely troubled in that way by a veteran dependent for whom he had a real esteem. Mister Spillane—he was no kin to a well-known Killarney guide—had been born on the estate and engaged as a supernumerary on the keeper's staff, before he

listed. With a regiment in India his sporting aptitudes recommended him to a notable regimental Nimrod who took Spillane for his servant and constant attendant in shooting expeditions. No Zouave was more resourceful in foraging for the camp kettles. Spillane came back to his ancestral glens with a pension and settled in a cottage near the Castle. He was grateful for free quarters and the run of the Castle kitchen. And he showed his gratitude by killing salmon, when there were any to be caught, and leaving them at the back door of the big house with compliments and kindly wishes. In vain the master expostulated, swore, argued, and even entreated. He pointed out that his best water was often spoiled for himself and his guests. Spillane was smiling, good-natured, and agreeably obtuse. 'Sure, your honour, if I knew that you or any of the company were to be out, it's always glad and willin' I would be to lave the pools for ye.' At last the good-natured baronet gave him up as hopeless, and, being loath to resort to eviction, resigned himself to grin and bear it. Now the last of that generation of wild free-shots is gone, and we shall never look upon their like again.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE LAST OF THE ROAD

I SAW the last of the road before it was superseded by the rail. Each year the pace has been growing faster; flying Scotchmen and flying Irishmen with few stoppages have been accelerated; now you may take your meals leisurely in Pulman dining-cars, and the blood horse, the pride and boast of England, is giving way to the motor car, the abomination of the road. I have been gradually converted from a progressive Conservative into a reactionary old Tory. The pace has been getting too fast to last, and must surely result in crash and catastrophe. Telegraph, telephone, and wireless telegraphy have intensified the hard struggle for life, while Krupp and Whitehead, Vickers, Maxim and Company, with all the inventors of explosives, scattering mutilation broadcast, have added immeasurably to the horrors of death. But I grow rhapsodical and sentimental. Nevertheless, sentiment will come in, when I recall, in the rose-coloured lights of old memories, the glories of the old coaching days. As 'Nimrod' remarks in his famous *Quarterly* article, roads and coaching had come to perfection just as the latter ceased to exist.

Some forty years ago, when shooting in Staffordshire, I remember being struck by a vast range of empty stabling, with an imposing pile of Georgian building, which had once been a busy posting centre, giving occupation to hundreds and enriching the farmers far and near. A small tenant lived in a corner of the old mansion, the roofs of the stabling were falling in, though owned by one of the most liberal of noblemen, and silence reigned in the weed-grown yard, which used to be vociferous with the shout of 'first pair out.' Almost as pathetic are the memories of the old London coaching houses. Where and what are the hostels now, whence coaches scattered in all directions? The Bull and Mouth, with its long galleries of subterraneous stabling, associated of old with the despatch of the mails, has been swallowed by the General Post Office. The Saracen's Head, Mr. Squeers's house of call, vanished with the construction of the Holborn Viaduct. The Belle Sauvage, where old Mr. Weller used to put up, is the headquarters of an enterprising publishing firm. *Tempora mutantur*. The Gloucester Coffee-house is gone, where coaches on the western roads would spare half a minute to pick up west-end passengers, and Hatchett's, the White Horse Cellar, has changed character and been fashionably transmogrified out of all knowledge. I used to know Hatchett's well, in the interval between the demise of the professional coaching and the birth of the amateurs.



When bachelor hotels were scarce in London, you got a comfortable and tolerably cheerful bedroom there. There was less to be said—I have said it already—in favour of the coffee-room, yet I liked it for its associations with the romance of the past. You thought of the scrambles before break of day, when waiting travellers hustled for a place at the fire, bolting the scorched toast and choking over scalding coffee. Or of the evenings when, chilled to the bone, they were helped down by the ladder, to feel their frozen feet, and find a lumbering hackney coach to reach distant quarters in a December fog.

It is a blessed thing that, in recalling the past, we are inclined to ignore the discomforts and only remember the pleasures. The walls of many a country coffee-room and parlour are still adorned with Fore's admirably graphic sporting sketches. In these both sorrows and joys are reflected. You see the mails loading for the night journey in the yards of the Swan with Two Necks or the Bull and Mouth, the passengers, in top hats and the tightest of overcoats, nerving themselves for the ordeal they regard with apprehension. You see with sympathetic exhilaration the coachman springing his lively team of bays, with glistening coats and sinews like whipcord, over Hartford Bottom to get a few spare minutes in hand against casualties. You see the up-and-down 'Quicksilvers,' keeping time to the minute, exchanging flying salutations as they cross in the deep cutting, illuminated by

the reflected blaze of the side-lamps. Then you have the grimmer side of the pictures, the hardships, the hazards, and the spice of veritable peril. The coach has charged an unopened turnpike in the fog, for the guard has got astray in his bearings, or the turnpike man has been deaf to the horn. The leaders are down in the shivered timber, one of the wheelers is plunging on the top of them, and we can fancy the feelings of the nervous passenger on the box seat who is screaming in chorus with the old lady inside. Or we see in the memorable storm of 1836, both Holyhead mails half buried in the snow, a chariot with luckless ladies within being steadily submerged in the drifts, and the coachman of the up-mail, who has rashly jumped down, engulfed to his armpits, and helplessly encumbered with innumerable box-coats. The guard, with prompt decision, is going off with the other wheeler and the post bags, but what must the shivering passengers go through before they are again in blissful communication with fire, food, and civilisation?

As for the disagreeables, perhaps the most unpleasant of all was that unholy hour of the early start. Things were not quite so bad as in the times of Colonel Hawker. The colonel, indefatigably energetic, though suffering from an old wound and much of a *malade imaginaire*, curious in pills and patent medicines, is always being called at 4 A.M., or taking a hurried header into damp sheets, before

being roused again to re-establish connections. But they were bad enough, even in my boyhood. In winter the outsider started thoroughly chilled, and had never a chance of getting warm. Our grandfathers, going on the principle of the survival of the fittest, had taken neither luxurious nor reasonable precautions against cold, and we of another generation, bred in their Spartan school, were following the fashion. Ulsters and railway rugs had not been invented, and the first of the looser and more comfortable innovations were the Inverness cape and the South American poncho. The burly coachman might envelop himself in coats and capes till he was guaranteed against any ordinary upset, though helpless if he were pitched head foremost into snow. The ordinary traveller wore nothing beyond the everyday winter walking clothes. The Duke of Beaufort, by an exceptional instance of astuteness, once brought a horse rug, to the envy of his fellow-passengers, when travelling as a lightly clad schoolboy from Brighton to Badminton. Tom Brown was a type of the traveller of those days, and Tom was the son of a wealthy squire and the darling of a doting mother. He had nothing wherewith to fight the cold but a tight-buttoned Peter-sham : and so I have fought frost and bitter North Sea breezes myself, when sitting crumpled up and crouching behind the coachman's back on the roof of Royal Mail or 'Defiance.' Serious smashes were comparatively rare, but drowsiness was a danger

difficult to guard against. The outsiders on the seats behind the coach-box or facing the guard were hanging between earth and heaven. One foot was on the slippery straw on the footboard, the other often dangling in space. Even when wide awake, a lurch might prove awkward ; and there were sharp corners in the narrow streets of many an antiquated borough town, where the top-heavy vehicle took a perilous swing. When you began to nod towards nightfall, or dropped into a snooze in the small hours, you were sitting in the very shadow of Death. On the box you were somewhat safer, for you were under the eye of the experienced coachman. In later days when going north for salmon-fishing or grouse-shooting, travelling outside through the night from Aberdeen, I used to catch at Inverness the northern mail for Tain or Dingwall. One glorious spring morning I scrambled up beside the driver, an old acquaintance. Had I refreshed myself with laudanum instead of rum and milk, I could not have felt more sleepy. It is a grand bit of galloping ground that skirts the firth, and my friend put his horses along. The ocean ozone, laden with the intoxicating fragrance of the sea-wrack, might have lulled a victim of chronic insomnia, and if the driver's elbow had not been kept continually in my ribs, I should certainly have been a subject for the coroner, had there been coroners' inquests to the north of the Tweed.

In winter or rough weather there was a choice of

discomforts, but, perhaps, on the whole the inside may have been preferable, though it was a case of tight packing in mixed company. You might have the agreeable society of the most fascinating of her sex. But it was much more likely that luck would be against you, with a corpulent lady by your side and a gouty gentleman opposite. I remember one bloated land agent, notorious for good living and always on the road in Kincardine and Angus. He had the consideration to pay for two places, yet his portentous bulk made his advent a terror to his opposites. Difficulties would always arise about dovetailing the legs, to use a familiar Americanism, and any movement to get at the pocket-handkerchief would provoke sulks and scowls or shrill remonstrances. You ran the ascending scale in sensations of discomfort, from pins and needles in the legs to agonising cramps. There might be the man with the hacking cough or the mother with the squalling baby, with an unpleasant habit of being coach sick. The nets suspended from the roof were bulging with loose parcels and umbrellas. The space below the seats was encroached upon with the fore and hind boots, for each cubic inch had been economised. The side pockets were stuffed with bottles and packets of cakes and sandwiches. There was a prevailing odour of spirits and peppermint drops, and the loose straw that carpeted the bottom was fusty and often damp. It was not the accommodation of a Pullman dining-



car, and yet it was then regarded as comparatively luxurious. For the price of an inside seat was half as much again as that of an outside place.

When I was a boy the last of the coaches were still in their glory. Excepting Chester, perhaps, no town in the kingdom could make such a show as Aberdeen. At three in the afternoon, groups would gather before the Royal Hotel in Union Street to see half a dozen coaches or more draw up before the door. The Post Office was round the corner, and the mails, timed everywhere sharp to the minute, were specially well horsed and appointed. The guards in their gold-laced scarlet made a grand show, and as they climbed to their tripod, a fragile-looking seat on iron supports, when the coachman had gathered up the reins and the helpers had swept the clothes from the horses, they woke the street echoes with music, more or less melodious. Some were content with a simple performance on the 'yard and a half of tin'; others, with a finer ear for symphonies, played popular airs on the key-bugle. The last of the mail bags was pitched into the boot, and all the teams were away to the chime of the church clocks. The mails were admirably horsed, but they were rivalled or excelled by the southern 'Defiance.' It was owned by Captain Barclay of Ury and Watson of Keillor, a wealthy gentleman farmer. In spite of hilly roads and the poorer horse provender of the North, it ran the Shrewsbury 'Wonder' or the Devonport



'Quicksilver' hard. Moreover there was less limit to luggage than on the mail. Yet summer and winter, including stoppages for meals and the passage of a stormy ferry with change of coaches, it punctually did its ten miles an hour. Lavishly horsed as it was, the wear and tear of horse-flesh was considerable. In those days I made no pretensions to the box seat; I did not court such snubs as gave David Copperfield his first fall in life. But I had generally a place immediately behind, for I had been recommended to guards and coachmen by a relation—an old ally of Barclay's—mentioned in Nimrod's *Northern Tour* as having sold Lord Rodney a Tilbury horse for the unprecedented price of seven hundred guineas. It was glory to travel by the 'Defiance,' but the great drawback was that early start. It did not go off in the afternoon, but at 5 A.M. A few minutes previously you were stretching yourself on the pavement before the Royal, having swallowed a cup of boiling coffee and bolted a crust. 'Up you get,' said the friendly guard; and there you were, with a tight overcoat and a flimsy plaid by way of leg wrapper. The first two stages were about the bleakest drive in bleak north-eastern Scotland. With a bright dawn there were magnificent sea-views, but I thought of nothing but the jolly breakfast at the Mill Inn, Stonehaven. Regularly as the coach pulled up at seven, the 'captain' was to be seen on the steps. He was always there to inspect his

teams, and he regularly dined early, in order to meet the down coach. What he wanted was horses that would go the pace ; and his coachmen were selected for his own qualities—strong arms, cool judgment, and iron nerve. One memorable morning I had the honour of being presented to him by my father, an old neighbour of his in the ‘ Howe of the Mearns,’ and I well remember what struck me most in the old athlete was the twisted cordage of muscle on the back of the hands that had dealt so many a knock-down blow and mastered so many a team of queer ones. His tastes and traditions survived. If any county gentleman had a vicious rogue of blood with some substance, he was passed on to the ‘ Defiance ’ and very soon brought to his bearings. One day, with Barclay himself on the box seat, we ran a reckless race with his neighbour Hepburn of Riccarton, who was driving a blood mare in a light dogcart. We were passed and repassed, but the heavy-weight was out of the running, and the captain was much disgusted when beaten on the long stage. With such horses we were not unfrequently on the brink of grief. There was a changing place on the North Esk, with an awkward slope to an ugly bridge, and there by some fatality we often had trouble. One time our leaders were a kicker and a bolter ; the one was plunging in the traces, while the other was lashing out over the bars. Or on another occasion there would be a sullen brute who cast himself down,

after having an old set of harness thrown under his hoofs 'to let him dance on the leather,' and then could only be persuaded to get up by firing an armful of straw under his belly. By that time the three yokefellows were all on end, like so many unicorns rampant. When the coachman could ease the straining wrists, they must have nearly torn his arms out of the sockets. It amazes me now that accidents were so rare, and the smashes and capsize were far from frequent.

Another marvel is how, even in these easy-going days, the coaches sufficed for the traffic. From end to end you must book in advance, in defiance of ulterior arrangements or the elements. At intermediate stations all was haphazard, especially on side roads served by a single 'daily.' Rivals were put on the roads, but they generally were driven into bankruptcy. At one country house, which was very much my home in early days, we were lucky in having a blacksmith's forge to wait at. Often have I sought shelter by the glow of that smithy fire when Vulcan was hammering a horse-shoe or fastening a ploughshare. When the 'Earl of Fife,' sarcastically criticised by 'Nimrod,' was sighted rising the brow of the hill, you speculated anxiously on the roof load and strove to count the heads of the passengers. But even if it were crowded, by favour of the guard, an active boy could generally bestow himself precariously on the top of the luggage. Guards and coachmen exer-

cised a despotism, tempered by tips. Proprietors who could not control them in details, left a great deal in their power. By tacit understanding, if they gave a friend a lift, they might pocket the *douceur* ; all that was expected of them was, that they should not be found out. They made a good thing of the delivery of letters and small parcels, never entered in the way bill. The fore boot was under the legs of the coachman, as the letter-bags in the mails were under the feet of the guard. But on the stage coaches the hind boot was a locker opened from beneath, and the burly guardian was to be seen balancing himself on the back step, extracting or tossing in parcels without the coach slackening its speed.

The coachman was wont to get handsome perquisites by handing the reins over to aspiring amateurs. The arrangement did not always come off so smoothly as might be desired, when there were fractious travellers with nerves. I recollect a gay young gentleman foolishly taking the driver's seat before the start and gathering up the reins with a flourish. One of the insides protested in vain, till he announced himself as a well-known and litigious local lawyer, declaring that unless driven by the coachman, he would get out and take a postchaise and four at the expense of the proprietors. The young Jehu had to knock under and climb down ; but he was a youth of resource and a part owner to boot, so he forthwith

took out a licence as 'extra coachman,' entitling him to peril lives and limbs at his discretion.

Naturally, with so much in their power, guards and coachmen were courted on the road. Nor was it altogether out of gratitude for favours to come, for it was their business and interest to make themselves agreeable, and they were recommended to their masters by their social qualities. I made a memorable night-journey from Inverness to Aberdeen on the northern 'Defiance.' It was the last professional trip of a popular guard. At every stage, friends already 'well on' as Tam O'Shanter, were sitting up to give him a 'send-off': jovial allies scrambled on to the roof to convoy him to the next stage: raw whisky and hot toddy flowed like burn water: the night owls were roused with song and catch; and when I was dropped in the morning at Inverury, the 'Defiance,' usually regulated like clock-work, was a full hour behind her time. The most remarkable tribute to the merits of the guard was that neither he nor the coachman were called over the coals.

Borrow makes a savage onslaught on the crack coachmen of his time; but Borrow, with the perversity of his very original talent, was always 'contrairy' or in extremes. So far as my experience goes, like Mark Twain's quartz mining cast, 'I think different.' I found them capital fellows, and kindly protectors of unsophisticated



innocence. I knew they were welcome guests in many a sporting mansion, cordially invited to the dinner-table when the cloth was drawn. One instance I recollect, when the rubicund coachman, though modestly seated on the edge of the chair, joined in the talk with respectful independence, but firmly declined a third bumper of old port—not that he or his colleagues made a practice of temperance elsewhere, and it was marvellous the amount of strong liquor those seasoned vessels could carry soberly and discreetly. For they were hand-in-glove with each jolly landlord down the road, and had a fatherly or loverlike smile for every blooming barmaid. Yet they lasted well, dying for the most part in a green old age. Talking of talks with them, I recall another veteran, crippled with complications of gout and rheumatism, who was persuaded by a friend of mine to cross Burntisland Ferry in surveillance of a pair of young cobs who were to be broken to harness. It was a bachelor household, and he was persuaded to dine with us. He had driven in South England as well as the far North, and when he dropped into vein of reminiscence, he engrossed the conversation. He not only was eloquent on experiences of his own, and some of them were sensational enough, but he had the traditional episodes of the southern flyers at his finger ends, in fog, snowstorm, and blizzards. The habitual performances of some of the long-distance drivers



might almost surpass in dogged strength of endurance the performance of their great patron Captain Barclay, when he walked the thousand miles in the thousand hours. He told of the notable guards who were at least as tough. Like the coachmen they were well conditioned men, who had matured and hardened in the service. But whereas the coachman could envelop himself in box-coats and horse-cloths, the equally bulky guard had to face the elements in lighter garments. The very tripod on which he perched himself seemed to have been devised by the authorities to chill his legs and keep him wakeful. The sensational days of Bagshot Heath and Epping Forest had gone by, when he had an arms' chest with blunderbuss and horse-pistols in front of him. Nevertheless, no corpulent elderly gentleman in the islands more habitually put limbs or life in peril. I have referred to the risk in picking up parcels, and playing the acrobat over the hind boot on a coach in rapid motion. Wrists and arms were under the wheels, when he was putting on or taking off the drag at a declivity. Or a trace would snap to the startling of the team, and then he would be down among lively heels in the dark to repair damages with the rope he had ready for such contingencies. In black fog or blinding snow-drift, it was he who had the responsibility of guiding the coach, when bearings were lost and landmarks obliterated. He stuck

to the craft so long as steerage was any way practicable, but when the stranded ship must be abandoned, it was his charge to get forward with the mails, even if passengers were left to be starved or frozen. Deaf to appeals, he unharnessed the leaders, mounting barebacked on the one, and loading the bags on the other. Then the heavy weight started to ride postillion over perhaps a hundred miles or so of snow-shrouded country, where all trace of a highway was lost, and which might have puzzled an Arctic explorer. Some of the deeds of those men who came in to be lifted out of their seat, fainting and frost-bitten, deserved the Victoria Cross. I may wind up with my own recollection of a comparatively trivial incident which happened in my nursery days. A guard who was livid with chill, and racked with rheumatic pains, came at late day-break to the laird's hospitable halls, to seek neither a warm bed nor a doctor, but a remount from the stables. The horse he had been riding had foundered. In fact it had slipped a leg down the chimney of a cottage, buried out of sight in the snow-fall of one terrible night.

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